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COMMAND EXCELLENCE:

What it takes to be the best!

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COMMAND EXCELLENCE:
WHAT IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

Introduction 3

People 10

The Commanding Officer 11

The Executive Officer 27

The Wardroom 35

The Chiefs Quarters 43

The Crew 49

Relationships 56

The Commanding Officer and Executive Officer Relationship 57

The Chain of Command 63

External Relations 69

Activities 79

Planning 81

Maintaining Standards 89

Communicating 101

Building Esprit de Corps 111

Training and Development 123

Conclusion 133

Appendix A: Methodology of the Command Effectiveness Study A-1

Appendix B: The View from the Top: The Views of Flag Officers on Command Excellence B-1

LIST OF FIGURES

page

Model for Command Excellence 7

Command Excellence Characteristics 8

CO Characteristics 12

XO Characteristics 28

Wardroom Characteristics 36

Chiefs Quarters Characteristics 44

Crew Characteristics 50

CO-XO Relationship 58

Chain of Command 64

External Relationships 70

Planning 82

Maintaining Standards 90

Communicating 102

Building Esprit de Corps 112

Training and Development 124

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Although the United States does not wish ever to go to war, it must be prepared to do so if necessary. Maintaining our combat readiness is a critical national priority. To be combat ready requires naval commands of the highest caliber, and this demands unsurpassed leadership. Mediocrity is unthinkable and unacceptable. However, the question of how to lead effectively and achieve superior command performance is not an easy one to answer. There are many theories, and even the opinions of outstanding leaders do not always accurately reflect what they practice.

To understand what it takes to be an outstanding command, the Leadership and Management Education and Training division of the Navy compared 21 operational units (12 superior and 9 average) from the three warfare communities (air, surface, submarine) in the Atlantic and Pacific fleets. The Command Excellence research teams, made up of Navy and civilian consultants, spent four to five days observing daily operations in each command. They conducted individual and group interviews with commanding officers, executive officers, department heads, division officers, chief petty officers, and junior enlisted. Wing and squadron staff for each command were also interviewed. In total, more than 750 individuals were interviewed.

In addition, the research teams administered surveys on how effectively different groups worked together and how each command rated itself on key activities (planning, standards, morale, communication, and training and development). Team members also examined such command documents as PODs, retention statistics, and NJP logs.

Only after the research teams finished collecting data were they told which commands were considered by the Navy to be superior and which were considered average. Once they knew the rating of each command, the research teams began isolating those factors, or characteristics, that distinguish superior from average commands.

The resulting data was organized by using a systems view of organizations. There are two key ideas in a systems model: (1) the whole is made up of parts that are interrelated--as one part changes, the other changes, and (2) the system, or command, exists within a larger environment that affects the functioning of the command, while, in turn, the command's actions affect the outside environment. Connectedness is the key to a systems view--change in one area affects other areas.

Figure 1 shows the organizational framework used to understand the commands studied and to develop a model of command excellence. As Figure 1 indicates, the research teams examined the organizations and people in the external environment that impact a unit's performance, the inputs that flow into the system, and intermediate and final outputs. Intermediate outputs are characteristics of individuals or groups that contribute to the final outputs. The final outputs are primarily the criteria used to distinguish superior from average commands. The characteristics of people, relationships, and key activities that distinguish superior from average commands were also isolated. Figure 2 shows all of these characteristics as a model of command excellence.

This text is for those who have leadership positions in the United States Navy--specifically, current and prospective commanding officers (COs) and executive officers (XOs). Its aim is to help these officers lead their commands to superior performance.

Assuming that you are, or will be, a commanding officer or executive officer, Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! can help you in several ways. First, it can help you diagnose the cause of problems in your command and then figure out what to do about them. For example, if there seems to be a lot of crisis management in your command, then the ideas in the Planning section can be useful. One might use them, for example, as a checklist to identify why crisis management is occurring. Is planning a regular, frequent activity that has command priority? If so, has this been made explicit? What are the command's long-range plans, and are they based on sound data? Have you gotten input from the right people? Are plans specific in terms of objectives, action dates, and who is responsible for what?

The model of command excellence that is presented can also help you be more effective by saving you time and energy. Using the model to identify the specific cause(s) of a problem, you will be better able to target your efforts. Continuing the above example, you may discover that people engage in a lot of planning, but that the breakdown is in the communication of plans. It would be a mistake, then, to have more planning meetings. Rather, a bigger payoff would come from using a wider variety of means to publicize plans.

In addition, Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! can be used to anticipate obstacles or benefits that might occur in implementing an action plan. One of the main points of the study is that the three integral parts of a command--People, Relationships, and Activities--are interrelated. A change in one will have an impact on the others. An action might be compared to a pebble being thrown into a pond: the effects ripple out, reaching further than the initial point of contact. For example, out of a concern for maintaining high standards, you might form "tiger teams" composed of people from different divisions, to tackle a job that urgently needs to be done. A secondary result of this activity might be that it brings together people who rarely see each other, thereby improving communication. It might also help promote morale and unity in the command by having several divisions do a job ordinarily done by only one. On the other hand, unless there is good coordination among the divisions, other scheduled work might not get done on time. So an action designed to promote standards has effects on planning, coordination, esprit de corps, and communication. Acquiring a sense of how the various elements of command excellence are interconnected will aid in predicting the unintended as well as the intended effects of an action. Armed with this awareness, you can act more strategically to accomplish command goals.

Appendix B contains a sampling of flag officers' views of what distinguishes a superior from an average command. Their outlooks on command excellence are in basic agreement with the findings of our study. Having passed this "litmus test" of the experts' experience increases the credibility of our study. Because these officers make decisions that affect command operations and base their performance evaluations partially on their concept of what a superior command should look like, knowledge of how they judge superior performance will help you accomplish both your goals and theirs.

Since the main purpose of Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! is to help you improve your command's performance, we suggest you read the text with one overall question in mind: "How can this help me lead my command more effectively?" When you read the examples of what officers and enlisted do in superior commands, ask yourself whether or not you, or your unit, has done something similar. If not, would there be a worthwhile payoff if you did? When you come across an example of an action taken to achieve a certain objective, we encourage you to think about whether there is another way to achieve the same objective.

We recommend that you read the entire text first. Then, with an understanding of how all the parts fit together, you can go back and study any section of special interest. As you read, we suggest you think about ways in which you can apply the command effectiveness study's findings to your own command. In the Conclusion, we offer some specific ideas of how you might do so.

It is important to keep in mind that we are not suggesting there is only one "right" way to lead a command. To do so would be to ignore the fact that people have different personalities, leadership styles, goals, and perspectives. The command excellence model is not a recipe or blueprint for success--rather, it is a guide. Though the facts indicate that superior commands need to do all of the things presented in the command excellence model, there are different paths to these goals. For example, monitoring morale is necessary for command effectiveness. But you do not necessarily have to get out and about every day to accomplish this, as some COs in superior commands do. One could accomplish this in other ways.

Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! contains numerous striking examples of how superior commands function. It is our hope that these vignettes will be inspirational and suggestive of possible courses of action for your command.

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE

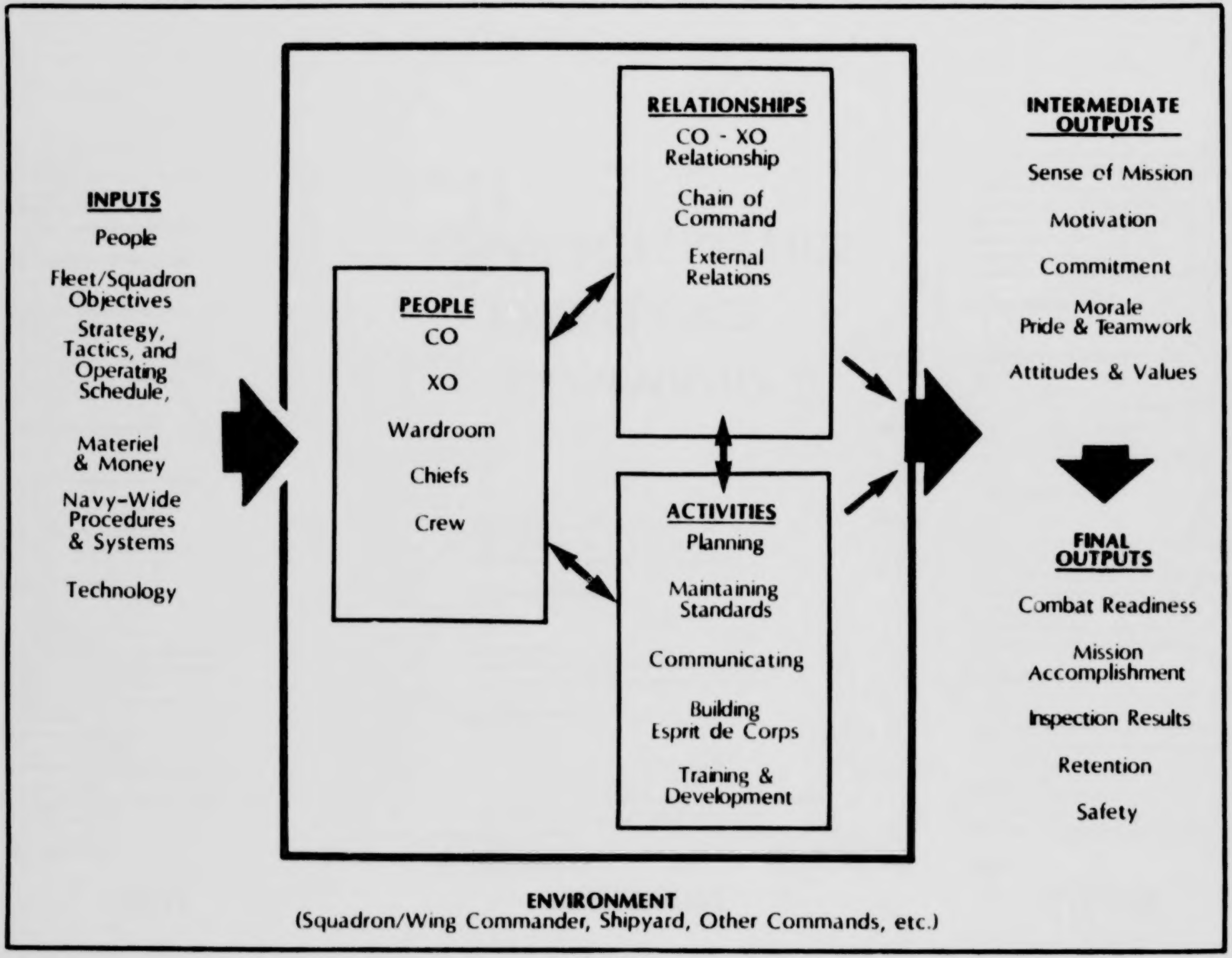


FIGURE 1

COMMAND EXCELLENCE CHARACTERISTICS

PEOPLE

CO Characteristics

- Targets Key Issues
- Gets Crew to Support Command Philosophy
- Develops XO
- Staffs to Optimize Performance
- Gets Out and About
- Builds Esprit de Corps
- Keeps His Cool
- Develops Strong Wardroom
- Values Chiefs Quarters
- Links Training to Combat Readiness
- Builds Positive External Relationships
- Influences Successfully

XO Characteristics

- Drives Administrative System
- Is Active in Planning
- Is Key to Unit Staffing
- Gets Out and About
- Ensures Standards are Enforced

Wardroom Characteristics

- Is Cohesive
- Matches CO-XO Leadership
- Raises Concerns with CO and XO
- Takes Initiative
- Does Detailed Planning
- Takes Responsibility for Work-Group Performance

Chiefs Quarters Characteristics

- Acts for Command-Wide Effectiveness
- Leads Divisions Actively
- Enforces Standards
- Supports and Develops Division Officers
- Is Cohesive
- Has a Strong Leader

Crew Characteristics

- Committed to Command Goals
- Lives Up to Standards
- Respects the Chain of Command
- Takes Ownership for Their Work Areas
- Is Motivated
- Works as a Team

RELATIONSHIPS

CO-XO Relationship

- CO Is in Charge
- XO Stands Behind CO's Philosophy and Policies
- CO and XO Have Well-Defined and Complementary Roles
- CO and XO Communicate Frequently
- CO and XO Respect Each Others' Abilities

Chain of Command

- The Chain of Command is Respected, But Flexible
- Information Flows Both Up and Down the Chain of Command
- Responsibility is Delegated

External Relationships

- Command Builds Networks with Outsiders
- Command Advocates for Its Interests with Outsiders
- Command Promotes a Positive Image

ACTIVITIES

Planning

- Planning is a Regularly Scheduled Activity
- Planning Occurs at All Levels
- Planning is Long-Range
- Plans are Specific
- Plans are Publicized
- Systems are Put in Place to Implement Plans
- Command Makes Every Effort to Stick to the Plan

Maintaining Standards

- Standards are Clear and Consistent
- Standards are Realistic and High
- Standards are Continuously Monitored
- Positive and Negative Feedback is Frequently Given
- Performance Problems are Handled Quickly and Appropriately
- All Levels Participate in Enforcing Standards

Communicating

- Communication Occurs Frequently
- People Listen to Each Other
- Explanations are Given Often
- Communication Flows Up, Down, and Across the Chain of Command
- Officers and Chiefs Get Out and About
- Personal Issues are Discussed

Building Esprit de Corps

- Positive Regard and Expectations Occur at All Levels
- Teamwork is Promoted
- Morale is Monitored
- Rewards and Recognition are Given Frequently
- Command Integrates Incoming Crew Quickly
- Command Focuses on Successes
- Command Encourages Social Activities and Having Fun
- Symbolic Activities Used to Promote Esprit

Training and Development

- Value of Training is Recognized
- Training is Kept Realistic and Practical
- Training Programs are Monitored and Evaluated
- All Levels Participate in Training and Development
- Command Emphasizes Professional Development and Career Planning

FIGURE 2

PEOPLE

PEOPLE

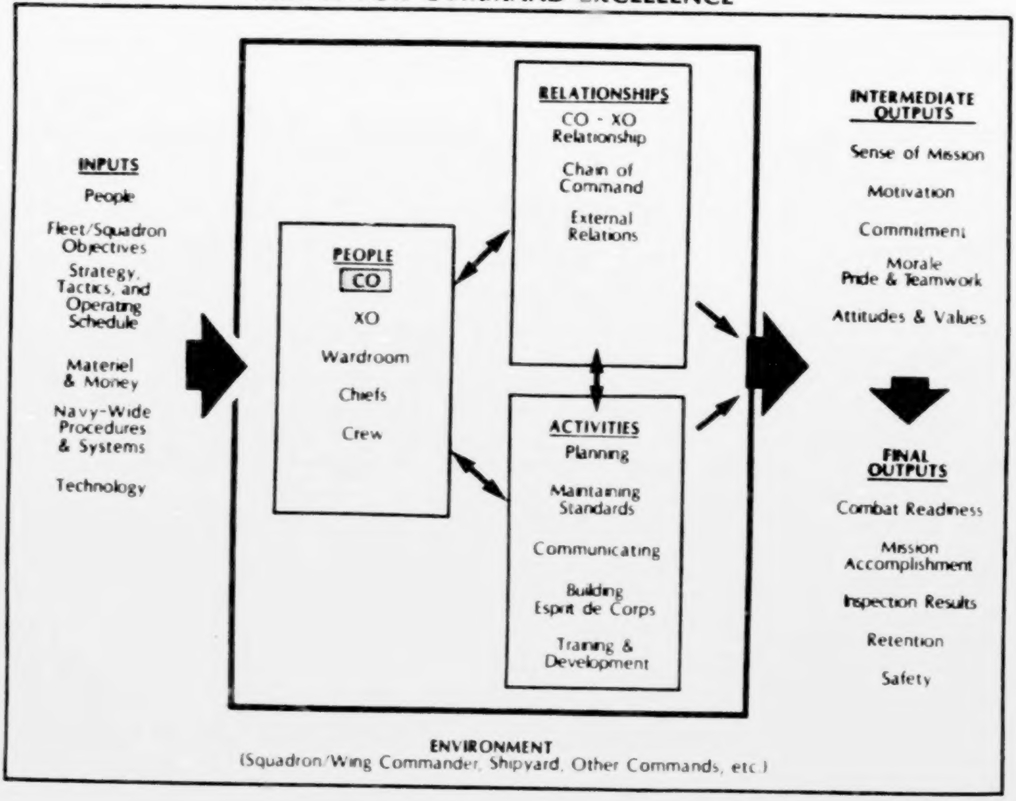
The people in a command are the most important determinant of success. Our study looked at the contribution that each level in a command makes in achieving top-flight performance. Not surprisingly, the CO and the relationship between the CO and the XO have the greatest impact on the character of a command and its destiny. However, each level has a special and critical role to play, and it is up to the CO and the XO to orchestrate the entire command to produce superior performance. Here's how each level functions in a superior command.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER

"A commander should have a profound understanding of human nature, the knack of smoothing out troubles, the power of winning affection while communicating energy, and the capacity for ruthless determination where required by circumstances. He needs to generate an electrifying current, and to keep a cool head in applying it."

-- B. H. Liddell Hart, Thoughts on War

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



CO Characteristics

- Targets Key Issues
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- Links Training to Combat Readiness
- Builds Positive External Relationships
- Influences Successfully

THE COMMANDING OFFICER

In analyzing the transcripts of the COs interviewed, we found 12 "themes," either personal characteristics or behaviors, that distinguished the COs of superior commands from those of average commands. That is not to say that the COs in the average units did not do any of these things. Indeed, on occasion, they seemed to exhibit all 12 characteristics. The difference is in completeness and consistency. COs of superior units did all of these things consistently on a day-to-day basis. The average ones did some of them usually but all of them rarely.

The superior commanding officer:

- Targets Key Issues
- Gets Crew to Support Command Philosophy
- Develops XO
- Staffs to Optimize Performance
- Gets Out and About
- Builds Esprit de Corps
- Keeps His Cool
- Develops Strong Wardroom
- Values Chiefs Quarters
- Ensures Training Is Effective
- Builds Positive External Relationships
- Influences Successfully

Targets Key Issues

Like a venerable Chinese sage, COs of superior units do more by doing less. They simplify things by focusing on the big picture and by identifying and prioritizing a few key issues. The CO of an outstanding HS squadron explained: "It's very hard in the Navy now to do everything that everyone wants you to do. You have to pick those things that you think are the most important. Nobody can do them all."

Aside from practical necessity, however, these COs realize that it is not wise for them to try to do everything because it's not the best use of their own or their men's talents. Instead they concentrate on what they consider the most important areas.

What they choose to pursue is determined, first, by their assessment of the most critical needs facing their command at a given time. As the situation changes, they emphasize different areas to work on. For example, when one CO took over the leadership of an aviation squadron, the command had a reputation for not meeting its flight commitments and of always getting beaten by its sister squadron. The CO identified one goal as paramount: "The number-one goal was to fly those airplanes and to establish a winning attitude--to prove to the men that they were not losers." To achieve this, he recruited top performers and pushed his men very hard. Once they became successful, his goals shifted to consolidating and maintaining the progress they had made.

The second determinant of what the CO emphasizes seems to be the CO's personal beliefs about the best way to achieve superior command performance. Each CO injects his personality into his leadership by having pet areas that he is particularly concerned about. For example, the CO of a frigate says that one reason he has captain's call with all paygrades divided into four groups is:

> I can reinforce any points that I want to reinforce. I always talk about combat readiness. I always talk about safety. I always talk about sanitation and cleanliness. Those are the constant themes, and any time anybody asks me a question about what's this and what's that, I say, "What's my number-one priority?" And they always tell me, "Safety is your number one priority.

However, always overriding these special concerns are those critical issues that he knows the unit needs to take care of to accomplish its mission. So there is a balance between paying attention to ongoing and long-range issues and more immediate and short-range needs.

So, these COs concern themselves with the big picture. They focus on such general areas as setting policy and prescribing procedure, interfacing with wing/squadron staff and Washington, and developing long-range plans. The crew of one outstanding SSBN approvingly attributed much of their success to the CO's "not sweating the small stuff." This also means that these COs do not micromanage. They leave the detailed, day-to-day running of the command to others. Unlike some COs of the average units studied, they are not constantly looking over their men's shoulders to see if they're making mistakes.

Gets Crew to Support Command Philosophy

Not all of the COs in the outstanding units had taken the time to write out their command philosophy or their personal statement of fundamental beliefs on how they wanted their command to operate and why. Nevertheless, it was clear they had such a philosophy, that they were successful at communicating it to the crew, and that they got the crew to buy into it. This resulted in high morale, commitment, and trust. We were surprised at how often we heard the crews of these commands commend their CO with what they considered the ultimate in praise: "I'd go to war with him."

How do these COs generate such support? For most, it's through being explicit. They simply tell their men how they want their command to operate and share with them their views on leadership. For example, one CO has what he calls "management seminars" with the wardroom and selected chiefs. At these he passes out readings that express his own ideas, solicits input, and discusses how they apply to running the unit. Others have special sayings that they repeatedly mention. On one submarine, all levels of the command interviewed emphasized that they operate according to the motto the CO had posted on the wall of his stateroom: "If you're not having fun, you're not doing it right!"

But for all of these COs it is their actions and personal example that most powerfully communicate their philosophy. It's through the COs' day-to-day behavior that their men learn operationally what is important to the skipper and how he wants things done. Here, actions speak louder than words.

Develops XO

COs of superior units do not forget that they were once XOs looking forward to their own command and trying to learn as much as possible. This causes them to pay attention not just to how the XO carries out his duties, but also to helping their XO prepare to become a CO.

To do this, they frequently communicate with the XO. Much of this communication consists of the CO asking the XO's opinion on some question or problem and then discussing the best course of action. One CO said, "When I roll out of here, my XO is not going to miss a beat; he's going to be right in step. I don't make any major decisions here unless I've talked it over with him."

Another way used to develop the XO is for the CO to delegate as much as possible--to allow the XO room to do things his way. If the XO makes a mistake, the CO helps him learn from it.

And then there is the more direct way of giving the XO feedback. Another CO describes his efforts to help his XO:

> When I took over, the XO was mean and tough, and I tried to tone him down. I told him: "Hey, you know you're not going to be able to do that as CO. You're not going to be able to walk into the control room and pick out somebody that has screwed up and just dump on him--because you'll wind up destroying him." I tried to get him to start thinking about a year or two from now when he would be a CO and how he would have to start handling himself more professionally and with more class. If he didn't, I told him, he was going to turn everyone off.

Staffs to Optimize Performance

"The right person in the right job at the right time" summarizes the way COs of superior commands staff their units. There are several important things they do to accomplish this. First is selection--getting the right person to do the job you want done. Second is assessing people's skills and experience to make the best use of their talents and then monitoring their performance. Finally, there's the CO's response when a person does well or poorly. When the job is done well, the person is rewarded and praised. When not done well, constructive feedback and counseling are given, or an attempt is made to put the person in another job. If all else fails, the person is reassigned.

We briefly referred to the air squadron where the CO turned his command around from being a poor performer to a Battle E winner. Much of this was due to the fact that the CO carried out an aggressive recruiting program to get the best maintenance people he could find. First the command checked around to get recommendations on who the top performers were in the ratings needed. Then they persuaded these men to come to their command. The CO himself was involved in talking with these men, especially in negotiating with a highly touted, water-walking maintenance chief. His strategy was to tell them how bad things were, how much he wanted their help to make the squadron a winner, and what they could expect to get out of it. There were few who got away.

Once they have the right men on board, these COs continue to assess the strengths and weaknesses of key players and to put people in those slots where they can contribute most. This means putting the good of the unit before the personal desires of any particular member of the command. It requires having a good sense of what the unit needs at any particular time and knowing the abilities of key personnel. For example, this same

CO knew that one of the strengths of his XO was his knowledge about maintenance, whereas the CO felt his own main strength was in operations. So, in those rare instances when he had to advise his maintenance officer, the CO would first consult with his XO. His philosophy was: "You can't know everything; you've just got to know the people who do. You have to put the right person in the right job."

Gets Out and About

The COs of these superior units are not "stateroom COs." They are in close touch with what is happening--or not happening--in their commands. A principal way of accomplishing this is by walking about the unit and talking to the men. Most of the talk is informal. In particular, it's not done in the spirit of looking over people's shoulders or trying to discover their mistakes. One CO explains what he does:

> I've got a personal goal of seeing three people a day and just getting out around the crew, walking around and saying, "Hey, guy! How's it going?" There are several questions I invariably ask. If he's married, I ask, "How's your family?" If he's not married, it's "How's your car?"--or motorcycle--or something like that. One of the things I always ask is, "What is the status of your advancement courses?"

Getting out and about, then, accomplishes several things. It allows the CO to monitor and build up morale. It provides an opportunity to answer questions, give feedback, and explain things. And it allows the CO to monitor the progress and quality of work. All of this adds up to higher morale and commitment, improved job performance by the crew, and more effective decision making.

Builds Esprit de Corps

COs of superior commands are vitally interested in the esprit de corps of their command because they know that it is directly correlated with performance. The elements of esprit de corps that they work at are high morale, pride, and teamwork. There are a variety of mechanisms used to create and maintain them.

All of these COs let their men know they value them and are concerned about their personal well-being. As we just saw in the previous section, one way this is done is by getting out and about. Another important ingredient is projecting a "can do" attitude and instilling pride--the conviction that this command is "second to none." These COs frequently tell their men, individually and collectively, that they have confidence in their ability not just to do well but to be the best.

Listen to the CO on a frigate talking about his success in "selling" his ship to the squadron staff:

> I'm in business just like you are. If Procter and Gamble wants to hire a consulting firm, you want it to be you and not somebody else. Why? Because you think you have the best product. That's exactly what I feel, and what I want my people to feel. I think we've been successful doing that. These guys feel that they can produce the best product. So when we go to war, they are confident that they are better than anybody else and that they are going to win. The whole thing, in a nutshell, is attempting to instill positive attitudes and personal confidence in all of my shipmates.

All of the superior commands we visited were quick to point out that they thought they were the hottest thing afloat or in the air. And, just as quickly, they would lay much of the credit for this desire and belief at the CO's doorstep. Here's the CO of another superior air squadron talking about the importance of pride and how he creates it:

> I absolutely refuse to do less than my best, no matter what that may be. And I try to instill that in my men. Absolutely, to me pride is the key to everything. I'm embarrassed if I don't do well on an inspection. I'm embarrassed for my command, and I want them to be embarrassed too if we don't do well.
>
> I try to instill pride through sports. I try to instill it in the way I wear my uniform and in the way I present myself. It's in the way I make sure my officers present themselves. If the CO doesn't look good, then in all likelihood, the XO and the department heads probably don't look good, and it goes right on down through the base. If the division officer looks good and the division chief looks good, then soon the people below them will start looking good, too. If you look sharp, it helps you to be sharp. So I think presenting oneself with pride and being a very positive person is important--positive that this squadron will succeed. My ops officer told me he had a note that I wrote last year that said, "This year we will win the Battle E." Well, by God, this year we won the Battle E!

An important way of creating high morale is by praising and rewarding men for a job well done. And these COs are instrumental in having this done throughout their command. Three of the COs of superior units arranged things so that work would be done by Friday and weekends kept free. The CO on the top-ranked submarine had in addition designated Friday as "Sports Day" and encouraged his men to use the afternoon to participate in one of the command's many team sports. He also frequently recognized outstanding performance by praising individuals at quarters or in the POD and by more formal awards, like letters of commendation and recommendations for Navy medals.

One highly appreciated reward is liberty, and these COs make sure that being in their command is not all work and no play. Here's an example from the CO of a helicopter squadron:

> I personally give time off. For example, right now we only work a four-and-a-half-day work week. Also, when I come back from various deployments, I'm authorized to give 96s, which is four days, or 96 hours, off. And I do it whenever I can. Last year we spent 102 consecutive days at sea in the Indian Ocean without touching land, and we flew 101 of those 102 days. These guys never had one holiday routine the whole time we were there. When we got back I gave them two 96s.

Efforts are also made to create a sense of unity and teamwork. This is explicitly encouraged by these COs, who frequently refer to their command as a family and try to get their men to act this way.

Most emphasize the importance of getting off on the right foot and quickly indoctrinate new arrivals into the lore and ways of the command. Here's what one CO does to make new arrivals feel a part of his "family":

> I usually know a little something about each one of the crew. I see every man when he comes on board. My instructions have been that the XO sees him first, but if the XO is not available, then I'll see him. We have a check-in sheet for each new person, and that process starts as soon as he comes on board. If I'm available, I will see him immediately. I spend about a half hour to forty-five minutes with him. We talk about his background, where's his family, is he married, a lot of personal things. And I ask about his greeting when he came on board.
>
> If he needs to take time off immediately after reporting aboard, we don't put him in a duty section right away. We worry about those kinds of things. We make sure that each man is taken care of.

A sense of unity is also developed by emphasizing that success depends upon a team effort, or "everyone pulling their load." And when success occurs, the "thrill of victory" is shared. For example, at an awards ceremony, one of these COs emphasized that the individuals receiving letters of commendation or medals could not have done so without the contributions of the rest of the command.

In each community, there is a tendency for certain organizational splits or divisions to occur. On nuclear submarines, it's between fore and aft; for aviation squadrons, it's between the air crew and the ground crew. On the latter, there is also an inherent, although lesser, tendency for conflict between maintenance and operations, safety and operations, and quality assurance and maintenance. COs of superior units pay particular attention to overcoming these divisions and creating a sense of "all for one and one for all." The CO of one top-ranked submarine explains his success on an inspection:

> I think we did well on the ORSE because the entire ship wanted to do well. I don't sense in our crew a big separation between the nukes, the weapons guys, and the forward guys. We've tried hard to bring that about, I guess because I'm afraid of it, and I've seen it on many other ships. Every new guy that reports on board that I talk to, that's one of the big themes I hit. One of the other things I do is to hold officer training after every evening meal. One reason I do that is to make sure that everybody in the wardroom sees everybody else at least once a day. It also gives us the time to talk about the whole ship with everyone present. And so the officers aren't ever allowed to think of themselves as being separate from each other. I think that carries on down to everybody else, too. I also do it because that way more of them will stay up there and watch the movie, eat popcorn, relax, and get to know each other.

Keeps His Cool

The COs of the superior units studied would have been judged fit for command by Robert E. Lee, who said, "I cannot trust a man to control others who cannot control himself." Although these COs act decisively, they are not impulsive. When making decisions, they assemble as much relevant information as is optimal. They are deliberate and thorough. They are not "screamers." When angry at someone for making a mistake, they do not chew the person out in public, as the COs of some of the average commands do. To illustrate, here's the CO of a superior surface ship discussing his reaction to finding out that they had failed part of the OPPE on a past inspection cycle:

> I'm sure that we didn't get the Battle E because we blew the admin part of the OPPE. We got our unsat

> as we anchored. I left the critique, and it took probably another 45 minutes to get myself under control. My first thought was to get upset at my chief engineer and the inspectors. I wanted to yell and scream at somebody, but I did not do that. We sat down and calmly had a meeting. I said, "This is what we're going to do to get this correct."

Develops Strong Wardroom

There are several things that COs of superior commands do to develop a strong and cohesive wardroom. They monitor the morale of the officers and try to create a relaxed, friendly climate where the officers are supportive of each other. They are particularly sensitive to preventing backstabbing. These COs also show their interest in the personal well-being of their officers by telling them they are interested and by expressing their willingness to talk about significant personal problems. They also develop the wardroom by delegating and meeting frequently with them, particularly to plan.

They appreciate the special role of the division officer, who is relatively inexperienced but must try to master technically sophisticated systems and also manage a group of men, many of whom are older and have several times his experience in the Navy. One way they develop the DOs, then, is indirectly through the chiefs. These COs emphasize that the chiefs should train the division officers. Here's the CO of an outstanding air squadron:

> I told my chiefs to train my division officers--train them how to recognize potential problems within the division; train them how to support their men; train them on when to give somebody positive strokes and when to give them red strokes; and train them on how to present themselves as officers. The chief knows a lot more than the officer does. I told the chiefs, "Make sure you train the division officers, because the next time they come back down here in the squadron, you're liable to find that guy as department head, or even CO or XO."

Another CO is particularly attentive to helping his officers move up the ladder. Pointing out that the Navy is "just as competitive as any business," he tells his junior officers:

> The most important time in your Navy career is the first year. If you don't do the job your first year, you won't get positions of responsibility the second year. If you don't get those positions of responsibility, when fitness reports roll around, you're not

> going to get the top fitness report. And if you don't get the top fitness report, then you won't get the next higher position of responsibility. If they hit the deck a-runnin', they'll do well. So we try to work on those guys those first twelve months and bring them along.

Another CO develops his officers through his staffing decisions:

> We try to make sure that every time a lieutenant commander walks in the door here, we guarantee him, unless he makes commander right at the end of his tour, that's he's going to get ops or maintenance regardless of seniority. So they know when they step in here that they're going to get one of the two big jobs that they need to be competitive for screening for commander.

Values Chiefs Quarters

"The chiefs run the ship" expresses the view of the COs of superior commands. They recognize and appreciate the special role of the chiefs, who have the experience, the hands-on technical expertise, and the management know-how to get the command's systems up and going and the crew to do their jobs. They are also at the top of the enlisted chain of command and are in closest touch with the crew.

Because of their experience, knowledge, and position, the chiefs in these commands are included in decision making and planning. One CO states:

> The chiefs are the eyes and ears of the squadron. They're here all the time. They know what's going on. If they come up with a recommendation to me, I'd be a fool not to listen to it. I've preached that philosophy to them--that they are to be involved. And I think they all feel that way.

These COs also realize that without the support of the chiefs quarters they will not have a superior command. After saying how essential the COB is to a good command, the CO of a submarine explains:

> I try to treat the chiefs as peers as opposed to servants. I don't go into the chiefs quarters unless I'm invited, and I encourage the officers not to go in there unless they are invited. I made it a habit with my old COB that he and I would always go around together for zone inspections, so that we appeared as a team

> to the crew. I religiously played three games of cribbage with the COB in the chiefs quarters after every inspection. Most of the chiefs managed to be there to root for their favorite. I was accepted into their group and could exchange ideas at their level. It's not something that I initially planned; it just happened. But it was very meaningful, and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

These COs also make special use of their chiefs by sometimes forming a Chiefs Advisory Board or even including them on Administrative Discharge Boards. The Chiefs Advisory Board tries to take care of problems before they get big enough for the XO or CO to deal with.

Ensures Training Is Effective

The attitude of COs of superior commands toward training is captured in the Chinese proverb: "The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war." When asked to identify three things that most contribute to command excellence, all of the COs in these units emphasized the importance of effective training, despite the "sweat" it entails.

But what do they do to make sure that training is effective?

- They state that training is important and they expect it to be carried out.
- They arrange to get special training billets for their command.
- They work hard to get schedules that provide ample time to carry out the planned training.
- They monitor and support training by attending quals, participating in training evolutions, or attending officer training.
- They ensure that training is effective by linking it to a specific aspect of combat readiness and making it realistic.

The CO of a ship explains his role in training to improve his command's firefighting capability for an upcoming OPPE:

> We drilled and drilled and drilled. We trained almost daily. I attended almost every drill and the critiques following each drill. At the critiques, I would emphasize particular problem areas, like com-

> munications or not responding fast enough. During the exercise, I would go to the various spaces and watch, having positioned myself in a particularly eventful area where I could see how my shipmates were doing. Our intent was to drill everybody in any contingency that could come up. I said something at every critique. I focused on the positive things and tried to say something good about all the team members involved.

An important part of ensuring that training is effective is linking it to a specific aspect of combat readiness and making it realistic. One CO insisted his men find some way to make the doors of the ship's compartments hot in order to simulate a fire there during a damage control drill. His men responded by rigging heat lamps to make the doors hot to touch. In order to focus their training for an upcoming inspection, another CO arranged to have one of his officers be part of the inspection team for another command. This officer was later able to brief his unit on exactly what they should train for.

Builds Positive External Relationships

One of the strongest distinguishing characteristics of COs of superior commands is their relationship with the external environment, which includes squadron or wing staff, tenders, shipyards, private contractors, other commands, detailers, and Washington staff. One aspect of this relationship is like public relations or advertising--promoting a good image of the command to important outsiders. One CO describes his command in terms of a product and talks about how important it is to sell his product to the staff and to convince them it's superior to other products, or commands. He feels this will make it easier for his command to accomplish its mission, but it also enhances the career of everyone on board because they will be coming off a command with a good reputation.

All of these COs, then, not only wanted to be superior: they also wanted to be seen as superior. Some believe that having such a reputation will make it easier for them to get what they want from squadron or wing staff. The desire to be seen as an outstanding command is the reason why many of these COs make sure that all communications leaving their command, whether written or by radio, are accurate, adhere to proper military form, and are free of grammar and spelling mistakes. They believe that others will form opinions of their operational performance based on the quality of these messages.

Another aspect of the CO's relationship with the external environment is his advocacy of command interests. This might mean talking to detailers to get superior performers, persuading the staff to give his command a better schedule, getting help from squadron or wing staff to prepare for inspections, arranging to get material resources, or getting needed services performed at a preferred time. In addition, these COs develop a wide network of positive relationships with important outsiders. This network provides them with valuable data that other commands might not have, and the personal relationships established facilitate getting what they want.

Another CO describes what he did to get the shipyard workers who were repairing his ship to clean up at the end of the day:

> The shipyard guys are supposed to stop working at 3:30, pack up their tools, and clean up their mess. But usually what happens is they pick up their tools and leave the mess. So, I had the supply officer go out and buy 400 fox tails and 400 dust pans, although I only had about 120 guys on the ship. Every day when that 3:30 whistle blew, everything stopped and everybody had to help clean the ship. Every guy went down into his space with two fox tails and two dust pans and would hand the shipyard guy one and tell him, "Here, let me help you clean up." So here's the shipyard guy standing there with his fox tail and the shipforce's guy is cleaning up. I told my men not to force them to help clean but if the guy refused, to get his badge number and let me know, and then I'd go talk to his foreman. Well, after a week, there wasn't a problem. Our ship stayed clean. Now, the shipyard people like to come work on our ship because we help them clean up.

In contrast to the characteristic of building positive external relationships shown by the COs of superior commands, the COs of average commands often see the squadron staff as an obstacle to getting the job done. Some do not have the skills to cultivate positive relationships, and others have little desire for frequent contact with the squadron staff, feeling that the squadron only makes life more difficult for them.

Influences Successfully

"A leader is a man who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do, and like it." So said Harry S. Truman. And our collection of COs of superior commands certainly fits this description. Much of leadership and management is influence, and these men are masters of influence. They are very successful at getting people to do what they want them to do and, as Truman said, to like it. In addition, they have a repertoire of influence strategies that they use, depending upon the situation and personalities of the men involved. At one time, they may use reason and facts; at another, a judicious display of strong emotion and a loud voice.

In particular, these COs seem to know how to push the right buttons to get their men to make sacrifices and to work exceptionally hard. Again, how they do this seems to be determined by the situation, the personalities of the men involved, and the values and leadership style of the CO.

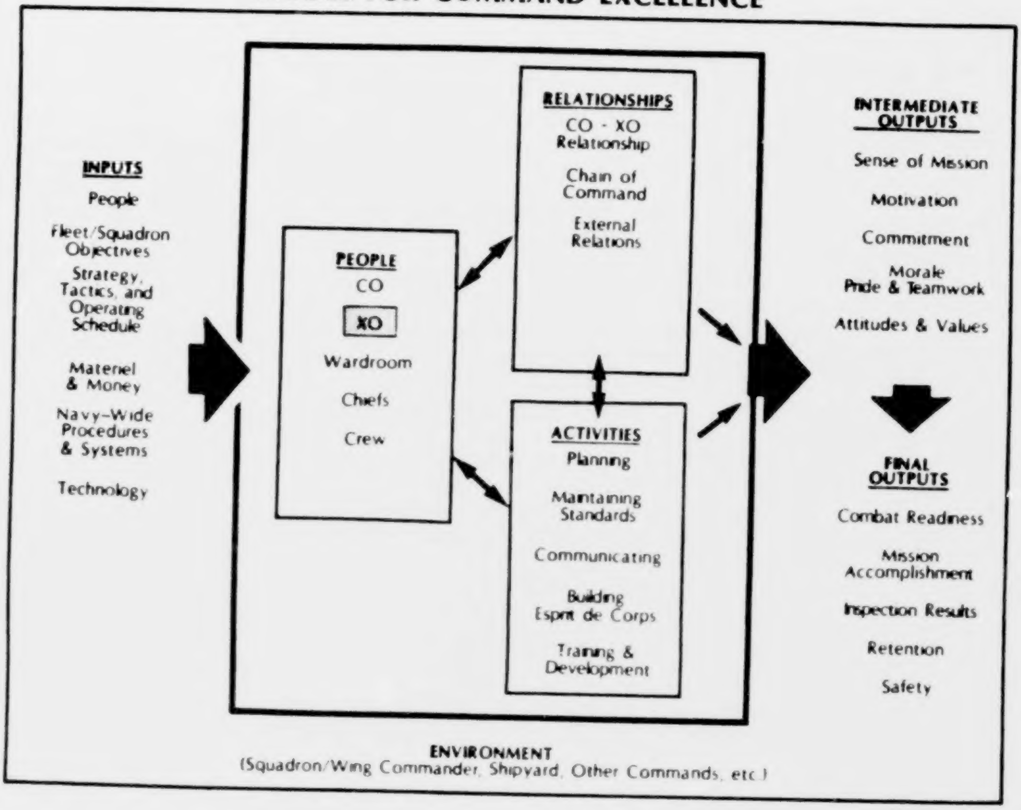
These COs realize that they often have to play the role of salesman to their sailors. One technique commonly used is reframing, getting the men to see an onerous task in a positive light--or, as the saying goes, "making lemonade out of lemons." For example, when the CO of one submarine learned that his boat, manned by the Gold crew, was going to have an unusually long patrol cycle, he was able to convince them that this was really a good thing for them. He told them, "The Blue crew really ought to worry because they are going to get rusty with all this time back in the off-crew office." The CO of a helicopter squadron was able to get his men to fly 101 out of 102 days at sea with gung-ho enthusiasm by emphasizing to them the importance of their job and how no one else could do it as well as they could.

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

"Executive ability is deciding quickly and getting somebody else to do the work."

-- John Garland Pollard, 1871-1937

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



XO Characteristics

- Drives Administrative System
- Is Active in Planning
- Is Key to Unit Staffing
- Gets Out and About
- Ensures Standards are Enforced

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As one executive officer put it, "The XO is the CO's alter ego and right-hand man." While the CO typically is the one who has the big picture, it is the XO who is most involved with the day-to-day running of the command. Much of the XO's duties center on personnel and administrative tasks. XOs describe some of their duties and responsibilities as assigning tasks, monitoring and routing message traffic, checking the quality of paperwork, writing and checking evals and FITREPS, monitoring correspondence from the command to the outside, getting the POD out, and a thousand and one other necessary details. It is the XO who has overall responsibility for the performance of the command's daily tasks and evolutions.

We found that XOs of superior commands do several things that distinguish them from the XOs of average commands:

- Drives Administrative System
- Is Active in Planning
- Is Key to Unit Staffing
- Gets Out and About
- Ensures Standards are Enforced

Drives Administrative System

Although it is part of the XO's official duties to be responsible for administrative matters, the XOs of superior commands are particularly aware of the importance of efficient administration. They know that if paperwork is not done properly and on time, operational performance and morale will suffer. On one of the average units visited there was widespread discontent that the first lieutenant was sitting on leave chits and not forwarding them to the XO on time. XOs of superior units, by contrast, have developed routines or systems to make sure people get their paperwork completed promptly.

One XO explains what he does as "heading off inefficiencies." He has a tickler system that lets people know each month when reports for that month are due. He delegates most reports but reviews them and gives advice on how administrative matters should be handled.

This XO also explains what he did when he first arrived and found that some people had not submitted evaluations in 14 months:

> I instituted a program where in four weeks we got caught up, and then we implemented a matrix, which is basically a 60-day continuum with people's names down one side and action dates across the top. On Day 1, the blank evaluation forms with people's names on them are submitted to the division officers for an initial cut. On Day 15, that initial cut is submitted to the department head. On Day 30, the initial cut comes back to me from the department head. On Day 35, the evaluations go back to the department head, and on Day 40 they are returned to me for the last time. At this point they are submitted to the ship's office for typing during the last 20 days so that at Day 60, the date they are due, they are available for signing.

Another XO says he has a goal: "We streamline all the paperwork management so that when it comes in it's handled within 24 to 48 hours and the answer goes back out to whomever the requesting authority is." He attributes part of his success to calling up the master chief yeoman of the squadron when they are in port to ask if there's anything coming up for them in the next several weeks. He says, "That's helped us a lot in making sure we don't get little notes that say, 'Why haven't you answered this on time?'"

Is Active in Planning

"The better we can plan ahead, the happier everybody is. When people feel that things are happening at the last second, that's when they're the unhappiest." This statement by one air squadron XO summarizes the attitude and commitment of the XOs of superior commands. Planning is a key element in achieving command excellence, and these XOs are intimately involved in driving, coordinating, and monitoring the command's planning activities.

What do these XOs do to make planning successful? They meet frequently to plan; they delegate people to gather necessary information; they talk to the right people to find out what's coming down the road; and they hold people accountable for providing input and for implementing the resulting plan.

As an example, here's the XO of a superior air squadron discussing how he prepared for a weapons off-load:

> We sat down, and we planned the thing. We had regular meetings with the people who were involved--probably two to three weeks in advance. There wasn't

> an awful lot to be done before that. We put out our own LOI even though the ship had one, and we assigned responsibilities. One of the most important things that I've learned is you've got to assign responsibilities and in a lot of cases put it in writing and say, "This is what you have to do." The second half of that is accountability. You need to tell people, "This is what your job is, and this is how I expect you to accomplish that job." That, to me, is the really key thing. There's too much of a tendency to say, "Well, we'll just work it out when we get there."
>
> We started having meetings--me, the first lieutenant, the command master chief, and the maintenance chief. We had a preliminary meeting and said, "Okay, what sorts of things do we need to be concerned about? What sorts of things will be problem areas? Who is going to take care of this? Who is going to take care of that?" Then it was just a progression of meetings as things went along.

As an aid to help him plan for future tasks, this same XO keeps a folder with an evaluation of each evolution. It contains suggestions from himself and his department heads on things that they should do differently the next time.

After meeting weekly with his department heads and formulating a tentative schedule, another XO finds it useful to present it at CPO call and get the chiefs' reactions to it. He finds this is helpful in avoiding conflict with other upcoming evolutions.

Is Key to Unit Staffing

Perhaps even more than the CO, XOs of superior commands are active in performance appraisal, manpower utilization, recruiting, and retention.

These officers also realize that the command cannot be the best unless it has superior performers, so they encourage and participate in recruiting the best people. The XO of a VF squadron states: "This command works really, really hard at personnel. We really go out and try to find good people. Every single chief that we've replaced has been replaced with a top-notch person." In one case he was able to "work a deal" with another squadron to get them to release an outstanding maintenance chief early. In another, he swapped one of their chiefs for one they wanted in another squadron.

This XO also mentions how proud he is of his command's retention program. They maintain a retention scoreboard, which is posted outside the Ready Room, and they use cards on which are written the results of regularly scheduled retention interviews. He explains:

> The first interview is done by either the CO or XO eight months prior to the individual's exit. Basically, every month somebody sits down and talks to him and writes down the results of that conversation. It is far and away the best retention program I've ever seen because it forces people to talk to him. Yesterday morning I went down, and I did all the Daycheck people. I have something in the neighborhood of 15 of them that I've done in two days. That's more than a lot of people do in three months.

Gets Out and About

Like their COs, the XOs of superior commands frequently and regularly walk about. Again, they don't do this to micromanage or look over people's shoulders. In describing his daily routine, one XO explains: "I try to get out every day and look at what is going on in the control room. I might check and see what the missile program watch is for today, stop and look at a set of logs, or watch a guy do his hourly cleaning. I find it very useful. It lets the crew know that the command is interested. They like to know that we are not just growing mushrooms on them."

Ensures Standards Are Enforced

Enforcing standards involves, first, letting people know what the standards are that they must live up to. After standards have been set, they must be monitored. As one XO put it, "You get what you inspect, not what you expect." If they're not met, corrective action is taken. The consequences of failing to measure up to standards may merely be feedback or EMI. But in more serious cases they may range from extra duty, to restriction of leave, to fines, up to administrative discharge or even a dishonorable discharge. Finally, when disciplinary action is called for, it needs to be fair and consistent.

On one of the helicopter squadrons visited, the men were preparing the aircraft for a fly-off the next day. One of the maintenance crew engaged the rotor with the blades folded and damaged the rotorhead. Although the XO was careful not to "get in somebody's face" and tell him how to do his job, he wanted to "make sure they were tracking in the right direction." The men were considering replacing the damaged rotorhead with a used one, but the XO thought this was too risky. He explains how he was able to maintain the squadron's commitment to safety:

> I tried to steer them away from that by just asking questions like: "Do you think there is a possibility of damage over in this area?" "Can you absolutely rule out that this didn't happen?" "How hard would it be to get the tools to change the spindle?"

To promote high standards, the XO on one frigate reports that he makes available to his men a book called Success Through A Positive Mental Attitude. As one walks through this ship, one sees signs stating how many "success points" were earned in an evolution that was inspected. The XO explains: "We stress success. Our minimum acceptable standard for any type of evaluation is a 90. If you don't make the 90, then you look at what happened during that event, and we reschedule it and retrain to ensure that the next time we do get a 90."

One way these high standards are maintained is by the XO paying attention to details. For example, not wanting their command to be seen in a poor light, several of these XOs report scrutinizing messages for spelling and grammatical errors before they leave the ship. As another example, here's the XO on the frigate referred to above, describing how he inspects the living spaces:

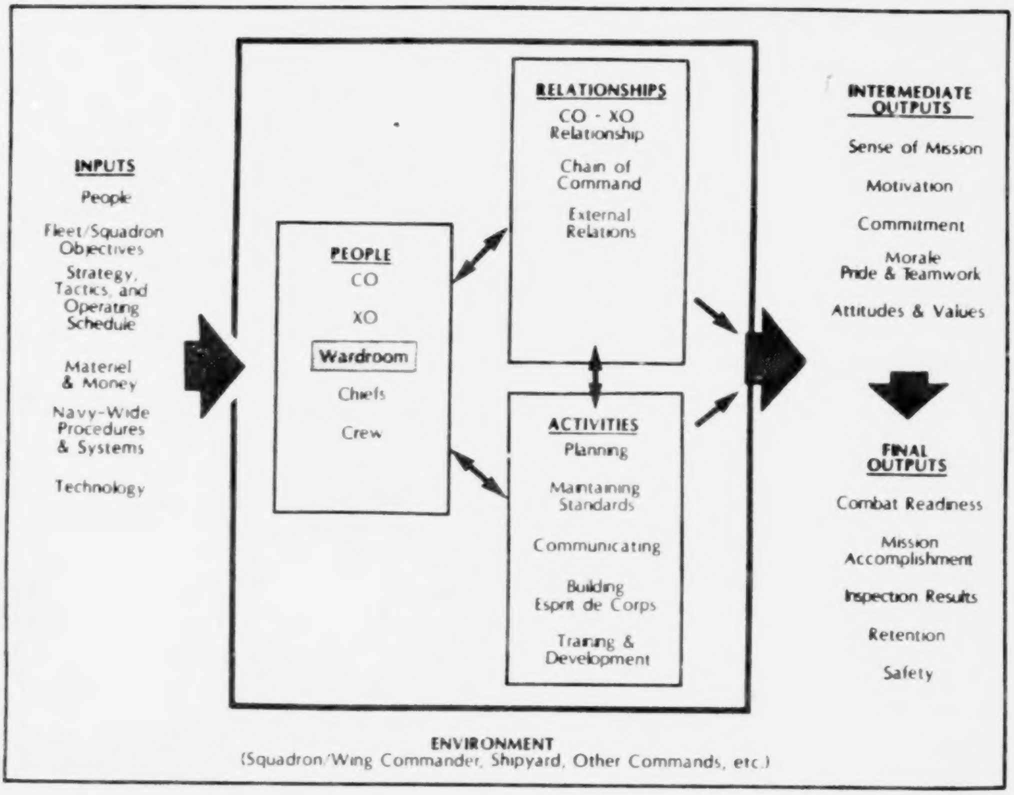
> When I go into the berthing spaces, I see that each man adheres to the rules and regulations, even as far as making sure that each man's books are stowed properly in his cubicle, that his safety strap is up, so in case of heavy seas he won't roll out, that the bunks are made properly, that the blanket is folded properly. I take a lot of personal pride in going through a space where you have 45 people living and there are no discrepancies. Now, I will not say that happens every day but probably three out of five days a week the berthing spaces have a flawless record. On the other two days, there might be one blanket that isn't folded properly. I nitpick that much. I go into that much detail because they know what the standards are.

THE WARDROOM

"It ain't hard to be an officer, but it's damn hard to be a good officer."

-- Remark by a Chief Petty Officer, USN

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Wardroom Characteristics

- Is Cohesive
- Matches CO-XO Leadership
- Raises Concerns with CO and XO
- Takes Initiative
- Does Detailed Planning
- Takes Responsibility for Work-Group Performance

THE WARDROOM

The wardroom is composed of the senior management of a command, the department heads and division officers. The division officers are among the youngest people in a command, and although they outrank the enlisted personnel, they are relatively inexperienced in terms of hands-on technical knowledge and management savoir faire. This means that the department heads must do their own functional jobs, but they must also be attentive to helping and developing their junior executives. Obviously, as the senior management of a command, how well the officers function, both as individuals and as a group, vitally affects the command's success.

Once again, there are differences in the wardrooms of superior and average commands. These are the characteristics of the wardroom on superior commands:

- Is Cohesive
- Matches CO-XO Leadership
- Raises Concerns with CO and XO
- Takes Initiative
- Does Detailed Planning
- Takes Responsibility for Work-Group Performance

Is Cohesive

The wardroom of a superior command work as a team. They talk to each other a lot, mainly to be able to plan and coordinate effectively. But they also talk with each other about personal issues. They have positive regard and expectations of each other. This does not mean that everyone likes everyone else, but they are able to work around these problems to function effectively as a team. They make an effort to support each other despite personal differences, and they are able to recognize and use each other's strengths. Despite the competition for future advancement and high ratings, they work hard at eliminating backstabbing. This cohesiveness also contributes to the high morale in the wardrooms of superior commands. They also often spend time socializing among themselves and with their families. This provides time for relaxation, but it also facilitates working together as a close-knit unit and further cements the bonds that hold them together.

The operations-navigation officer on a submarine described how his wardroom worked together to deal effectively with a previous XO who "hollered and screamed" at people. They talked among themselves about how to support him, using a lot of humor to defuse their feelings of frustration. Although they were aware of his shortcomings, they also could acknowledge his strengths, such as having many creative ideas. They made an effort to pick up the pieces in the wake of his explosions at people. Sometimes this involved alerting him to the consequences of his behavior or talking to the men he had unloaded on. The whole wardroom would help in "defusing crises and re-establishing egos to get people back on the center line so they could do their job."

Because of the special position of the division officers, the department heads of superior commands make a special effort to work with them and make them feel they are a part of the team. Here's one department head describing how he works closely with the division officers to help them plan:

> I try to sit down and help them prioritize, plan, monitor their progress, and I try to keep them informed so they know the big picture. It takes continual counseling. You sit down with them and say, "O.K., let's review the projects you're working on. Where are you with each one of these projects?" Then, you may need to tell them, "I think you need to change your priorities on this one. We've got to get that other one done first. I understand that you want this one very badly, but it's not going to produce the results." You have to explain to them what's going to be visible and what's not.
>
> If I see there's something they're not going to be able to do, I usually grab them and say, "Let's go talk to the XO and tell him what the problems are." Then we follow the guidance that we get from the front office.

Average commands are characterized by more competitive behavior and less mutual support. There is less coordination and communication. People who should be talking to each other to plan and carry out evolutions don't. Division officers are more often left to their own devices. And there seems to be less of an attempt to help or work around other "problem" officers.

tches CO-XO Leadership

We found that in superior commands there is more congruence etween the wardroom and the CO-XO on command philosophy and eadership style than in average commands. Put simply, every- ne is headed in the same direction. They identify with the oals set by the CO and XO and with how the CO and XO wish to ccomplish them. In average commands, there are more people ho are just standing around watching or even pushing in the pposite direction.

This theme was strongly indicated in our survey data and as evident in our group interviews with the officers. In uperior commands, people were more aware of what the command's oals and philosophy were and were more enthusiastic about sup- orting them. In average commands, sometimes people did not now the goals or philosophy, or were cynical about them or ven openly critical. In addition, there was a matching of *how* hings were done in superior commands. This was also evident n the fact that in superior commands the officers reinforced he command philosophy with subordinates. They left little oubt in their men's minds that they were aligned with the view rom the top.

aises Concerns with the CO and XO

Officers of superior commands also readily ask the CO or XO or guidance or information if they believe these are necessary o accomplish their jobs or to advance their own professional evelopment. This involves raising issues with the CO or XO efore they turn into serious problems. They act according to he adage, "There are no dumb questions." Besides getting in- uts from above, they also report both good news and bad news. owever, when they raise concerns, they do not go in without a ell-thought-out course of action to propose.

akes Initiative

Officers of superior commands take initiative in three ays. First, when they see that something needs to be done hey do it without waiting to be told. Second, they try to ind new and better ways to get the job done. And third, they re willing to do extra things to enhance mission accomplish- ent, even if they are not technically part of their job de- cription.

One officer suggested and implemented the idea of devel- ping slides to use in his boat's briefs. Another officer in- tituted a matrix planning form to catch up on overdue evals nd to make sure evals were done on time in the future. An operations officer in an air squadron persisted in his attemp to get some ASW practice time with a real sub. After his request was turned down by the squadron staff, he went to the flag staff, who referred him back to the squadron ASW officer They eventually did get some sub time but, in his words, "It was a matter of liaisoning with the staff, repeatedly pressur ing and harassing them until they finally broke down and did it." All of these individuals undertook these actions withou waiting to be told to do them.

In average commands, there is a tendency for officers to wait to be told what to do and to accept the status quo. New ideas are resisted, and people are likely to play it safe.

Does Detailed Planning

The wardroom plays a major role in developing and impleme ing short- and long-range plans to achieve the command's goal After learning the command's goals from the CO and XO, the of ficers develop plans for their departments and divisions by g ing input from their chiefs and other relevant sources. They pay special attention to coordinating their department's acti ties with other work going on. For example, the engineer doe not test ship service generators when the electronic technicians are calibrating electronic equipment. They make sure that plans are specific in terms of who is to do what, when, and how. These commands usually write down weekly goals that need to be accomplished to prepare for a major evolution, suc as an OPPE. Plans are then publicized so that everyone knows what to expect. They then delegate tasks and monitor how wel the plan is being carried out.

Takes Responsibility for Work-Group Performance

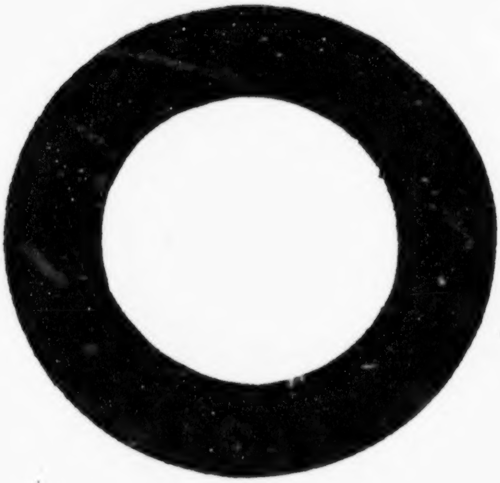
One of the greatest strengths of wardrooms of superior commands is their sense of responsibility for the performance of the people in their department. This leads them to try to anticipate problems before they occur, to take responsibility when a problem occurs that they should have prevented, and to hold their men accountable for meeting the command's standard It is a sense of personal ownership--something like a garden that one diligently cultivates, or a house in whose appearanc one takes pride. These men have the same sense of pride and attachment to their turf, their department. When there are weeds, they take it as a personal affront and act decisively t get things in order.

As an example, shortly after his arrival, the personnel officer in an aviation squadron was asked by his CO about the status of back pay for men who would be leaving soon. When th personnel officer asked the yeoman who was responsible, he was told that the claims had all been submitted. He reported this to the CO and said they were just waiting for the money to arrive. A few days later, however, he noticed several claims on the yeoman's desk that were several months old: they had been returned because they had not been filled out properly. Further investigation revealed that there were numerous outstanding travel claims, and this was why men had not been paid for the previous four detachments.

After going over some of the returned claims with the yeoman, the personnel officer concluded that the yeoman did not understand how to do the paperwork properly and had just stuffed it in his drawer and ignored it as long as no one bugged him about it. The next thing the officer did was to confront the first-class petty officer responsible for supervising the yeoman to find out why he had not caught the problem. He then arranged for the problem to be fixed. He reports:

> As soon as I found out that things were as bad as they were, I marched right back down to the skipper's office and said, "I'm sorry but I didn't give you the straight word. This is what happened, and this is what I'm doing to take care of it." I felt I was obligated to go back to him and tell him what was going on--not only that we did it wrong but that it was three months overdue. Although I wasn't there when it happened, by being the guy that's in charge, it's still my responsibility. I was embarrassed that it had gotten out of hand.

Officers in superior commands "take the heat" for problems in their departments or divisions. Because of the command environment, officers readily accept this responsibility and enjoy the leadership challenges they are given. They do not need to blame others for their mistakes; they are willing to share the credit for their departments' or divisions' successes.

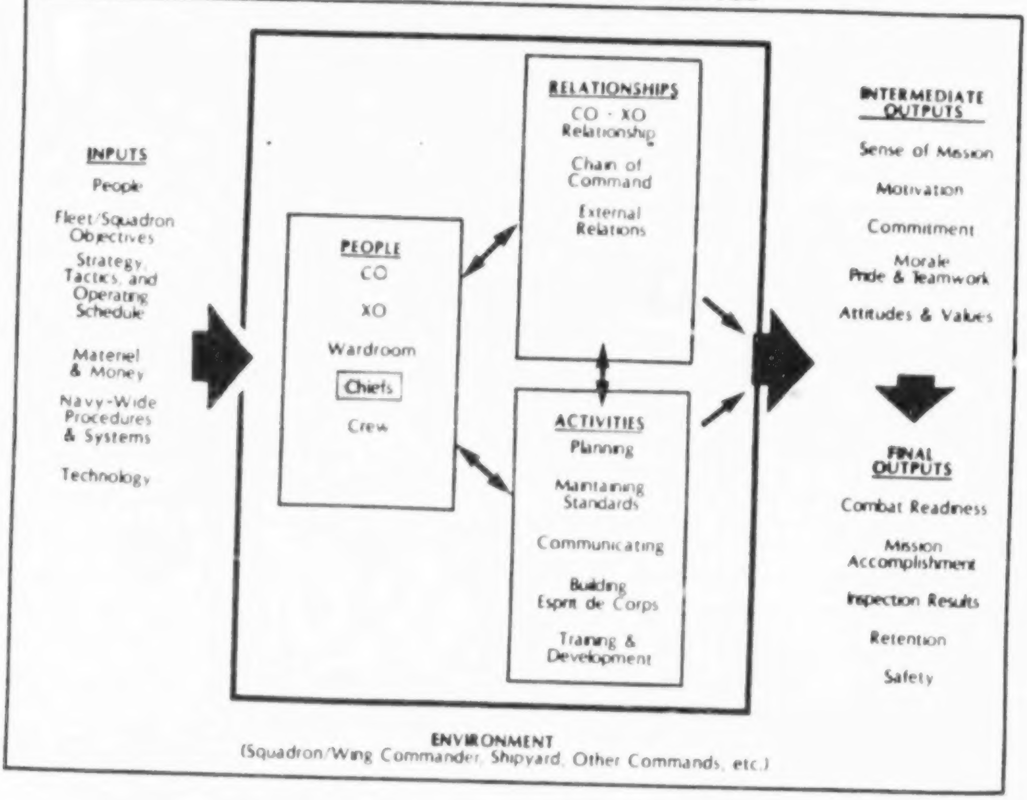


THE CHIEFS QUARTERS

"The Chiefs run the ship."

-- Traditional Navy saying

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Chiefs Quarters Characteristics

- Acts for Command-Wide Effectiveness
- Leads Divisions Actively
- Enforces Standards
- Supports and Develops Division Officers
- Is Cohesive
- Has a Strong Leader

THE CHIEFS QUARTERS

"We've got some damn good chiefs, and 98% of the job is chief petty officers. They make the Navy run. They make my job so much easier. I'm really tickled by them."

-- Executive Officer (Air)

"The backbone of the Navy." This old adage well sums up the role of the chiefs in the superior commands we studied. In these commands, the special role and contribution of the chief petty officers was readily acknowledged. It is true, though, that the chiefs in any command play a unique role just because of the position they occupy in the organizational structure and the qualifications for becoming a chief petty officer. They are the senior management for the enlisted personnel; they are the interface or linchpin between officers and enlisted; they have many years' experience in the Navy; and they are the hands-on technical experts. Although they share these characteristics with chiefs in average commands, those in superior commands act in a distinct fashion to contribute to their command's superior effectiveness.

Examples to illustrate exactly what the chiefs do in each area of command excellence are given in the Relationships and Activities sections. Here, we present an overview of what the chiefs quarters is like in superior commands. The chiefs quarters in superior commands:

- Acts for Command-Wide Excellence
- Leads Divisions Actively
- Enforces Standards
- Supports and Develops Division Officers
- Is Cohesive
- Has a Strong Leader

Acts for Command-Wide Excellence

Chiefs in superior commands act to promote the success of the command as a whole. Although they have a strong sense of ownership and take responsibility for their division, they are able to look beyond their own immediate job to help the entire command. One way this manifests itself is in upholding standards. For example, if a chief sees a man who needs a haircut and who is not in his division, he will notify the man's chief or tell the man directly and then notify his chief. His attitude is not, "That guy's not in my division, so it's none of my business." This command-wide orientation also occurs when another division or department needs assistance. Chiefs in superior commands help each other out.

When planning work schedules and watches they talk to each other to make sure there are no conflicts. This was also evident on one submarine, when the chiefs got together and decided to push cross-training their men as much as possible. They reasoned that if their men were qualified in more than one area, developing watch bills would be easier, it would spread the workload and knowledge around more, and the entire command would benefit.

Leads Divisions Actively

In order for there to be a strong chiefs quarters, the chiefs must feel that they are valued and that they have the authority and responsibility to do the job the way they think it ought to be done. In the superior commands, the chiefs feel that their special leadership role is sanctioned and appreciated by the rest of the command, especially the commanding officer. They are valued particularly for their technical expertise but also for their managerial experience. In these commands, the chiefs are included in all major activities, particularly in planning. Their input is sought and readily given. If the chiefs believe that something won't work or that there is a better way to do it, they speak up. As evidence of the confidence the command has in them, in all of the superior commands studied, the chiefs could grant liberty on their own.

In general, chiefs in superior commands lead by taking responsibility for their divisions. This includes motivating their men, counseling them, defending them against unjust criticism, monitoring and enforcing standards, giving positive and negative feedback, communicating necessary information, soliciting input and monitoring morale, and taking the initiative to propose new solutions and to do things before being told.

This is a demanding role. However, chiefs in superior commands relish it and have the self-assurance that they can do it well. Chiefs in average commands have a harder time doing these things, in part because they sometimes do not feel that the role fits them. They do not seem to wear the mantle of chief petty officer as easily and as decisively as chiefs in superior commands. In superior commands, there is no doubt in anyone's mind about who is in charge of the crew. The officers know, the crew knows, and, most important, the chiefs know.

Enforces Standards

Chiefs play a key role in the enforcement of standards in superior commands. Because they are out and about, they are able to see for themselves whether job performance and military bearing and protocol meet the Navy's and the command's standards. When something is not up to standard, they give feedback and act to correct it. When work is done well, they also recognize and reward that. A major way these chiefs enforce standards is by modeling the kind of behavior they expect their men to display. If the chief does something that is not quite right, they redo it until it is right. If they expect their men to work long hours to get something done, then they are right there with them. A more drastic example of how chiefs enforce standards is that of a new maintenance control chief in an air squadron who discovered that his troubleshooters were not doing a good job. Attempts to give them feedback and change their nonchalant attitude failed, so he fired all of them and trained a new group committed to living up to the command's high standards. Again, he was able to do this because he had the support and trust of the CO and others above him.

Supports and Develops Division Officers

Superior commands understand the difficult role of the division officer and the problems that can arise in the relationship between chief petty officers and division officers. Chiefs in these commands are sensitive to this and support and develop the division officer. One way they do so is by suggesting to the division officer what should be done to solve problems. They also tactfully let the divsion officer know if they think he is charging off in the wrong direction. At the same time, even if a chief in one of these commands disagrees with the division officer's final decision, he does not undercut him by saying so in public and does not tolerate criticism of the division officer in public by the crew.

Is Cohesive

The chiefs quarters in superior commands is a tight-knit team. They talk to each other a lot, coordinate well, solicit input from each other, identify with the command's philosophy and goals, and treat each other with professional respect. A strong part of this cohesiveness results from the collective and conscious adoption of the goal of being the best and not settling for less than that. There is a consensus and confidence in the fact that this is what the entire chiefs quarters is shooting for.

If there is a weak chief on the team, they directly address the issue by trying to help him overcome his weaknesses or helping out to make sure that the effectiveness of the command does not suffer. They may even recommend that he be reassigned to another area of responsibility that he can more easily handle. They also take the time to listen and help each other with personal problems. They do not ridicule each other or engage in backbiting. The chiefs quarters in these commands is relaxed, amiable, and a popular hangout. The cohesiveness of the chiefs quarters is also reflected in the fact that they often socialize together.

Has a Strong Leader

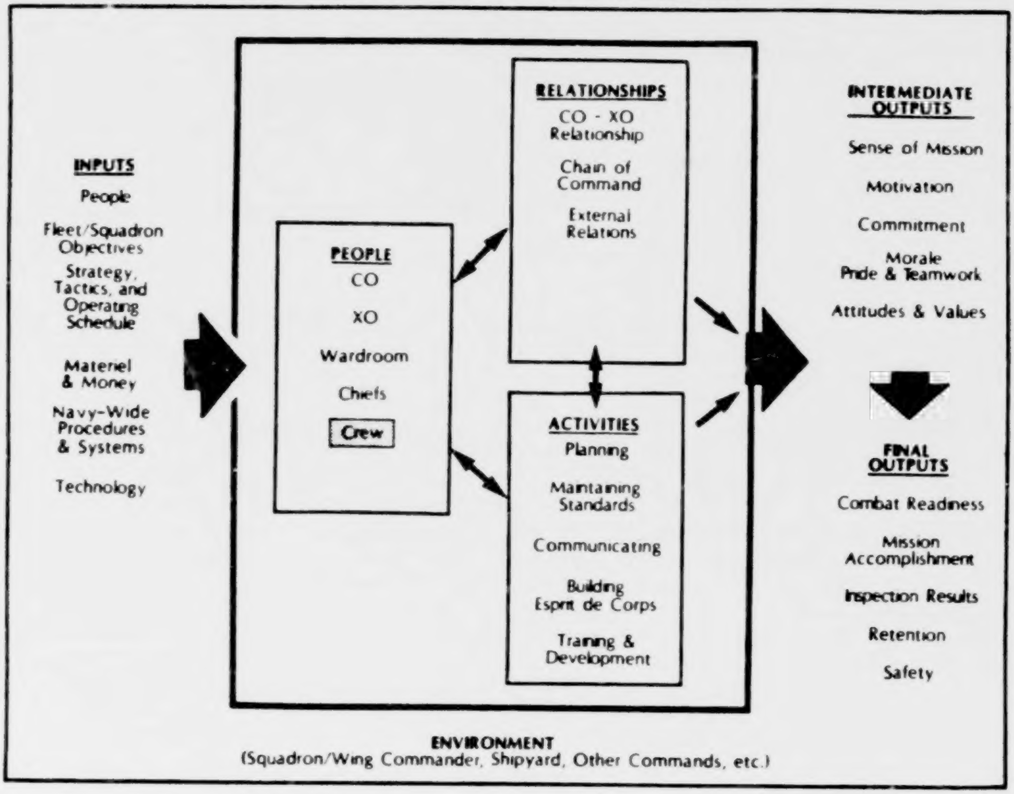
In superior commands the cohesiveness and high morale of the chiefs quarters is in part due to the presence of a strong leader. The leader may be a formal leader, like the chief with the highest rank, but he can just as well be an informal leader, one who leads through charisma or superior know-how. This chief usually plays the role of standard-bearer for the command, being enthusiastic about it, encouraging and giving support to people, and driving them to excel. It is also usually someone whom the rest of the chiefs perceive as fair, as standing up for their interests and those of the crew, as willing to listen with an open mind, and as highly competent. This person is often sought out by the CO or XO to sample the tone of the chiefs quarters or crew or to get his advice on matters concerning enlisted personnel. In superior commands there is a consensus as to who this person is. In average commands, there is no such consensus and, frequently, no such leader.

THE CREW

"The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there."

-- John Buchen, 1875-1940

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Crew Characteristics

- Committed to Command Goals
- Lives Up to Standards
- Respects the Chain of Command
- Takes Ownership for Their Work Areas
- Is Motivated
- Works as a Team

THE CREW

Up till now, we have focused on the roles and significance of senior and middle management, so to speak, in producing command excellence. Clearly, however, there is another group that plays a key role in achieving command excellence, and that is the crew. It is the crew, constituting the bulk of the command, that the officers and chiefs must lead and manage to accomplish the command's mission. This relationship is suggested by the old Navy saying of "What is a captain without a ship, and what is a ship without a crew?" This dependence is also reflected in the adage that the crew is where "the keel meets the water."

By being in the command a process of transformation takes place that affects a crew member's behavior, motivation, values, knowledge and skills, team orientation, and personality. The different manner of leading and managing officers and chiefs in superior commands results in differences between the crew in superior commands versus the crew in average commands. Without going into much detail, here are the characteristics of crews in superior commands:

- Committed to Command Goals
- Lives Up to Standards
- Respects the Chain of Command
- Takes Ownership for Their Work Areas
- Is Motivated
- Works as a Team

Committed to Command Goals

Due to the success of the CO at communicating and influencing, the crew of superior commands is able to articulate the command's philosophy and is committed to it. This is accomplished also by the officers and chiefs making sure that explanations and information get to the crew in an accurate and timely manner. They have a clear understanding of what must be done and how the command expects it to be done. They feel like they are an integral part of a team or family and speak with pride, for example, of "my squadron (boat, ship)." In average commands, we found more disagreement about what the command's philosophy was and more questioning of its correctness.

Lives Up to Standards

In superior commands the officers and chiefs make sure that standards are clear, and that they are monitored and enforced. Because of this, their identification with the command, and their high motivation, the crew also accepts and tries to live up to the command's high standards. They also monitor their own performance and that of their co-workers and give feedback where it is appropriate. They are committed to doing things right the first time.

Respects the Chain of Command

The crew of superior commands follows the chain of command. If they want something done, they go to their immediate superior first. They understand how the chain of command is supposed to work and the value of adhering to it. Aside from going to the appropriate person to get things done, respecting the chain of command also means respecting people higher in rank. In our group interviews with crew members in average commands, there was much more criticism and ridicule of their superiors. In superior commands, there was very little of this.

Takes Ownership for Their Work Areas

Crews of superior commands take responsibility for their own individual performance and the performance for their division. This is fostered by their pride in the command, the clarity of standards, the amount of authority they are given, and the fact that they are held accountable by their supervisors and chiefs. They also know that if they do the job well, they will be recognized and rewarded.

Is Motivated

One of the most striking aspects of our interviews with the crews of superior and average commands was their enthusiasm, pride, and positive attitude. Morale in superior commands was much higher than in the average ones. This resulted in jobs being done on time, done well, and people taking the initiative to propose better ways of doing things.

Works as a Team

Crew members of superior commands realize that they are all in the same boat together and that they are dependent on each other. They must work together as a team to accomplish their individual jobs, the tasks of their division, and the mission of he command as a whole. They communicate with each other freuently through sharing information, soliciting input, giving eedback, discussing job-related problems, and talking about ersonal issues. They cooperate, coordinate, and share reources. Each person is clear about his role, is committed to common goal, and works hard to achieve it. And they suport each other. They realize that to be a team, there can be o prima donnas and that each person must pull his fair share f the weight.

RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS

A command is not just a collection of people. Rather, people interact in patterns, some informal and some formal. In each command, people come to relate to each other in recurring and distinctive ways. The quality of these relationships impacts command excellence.

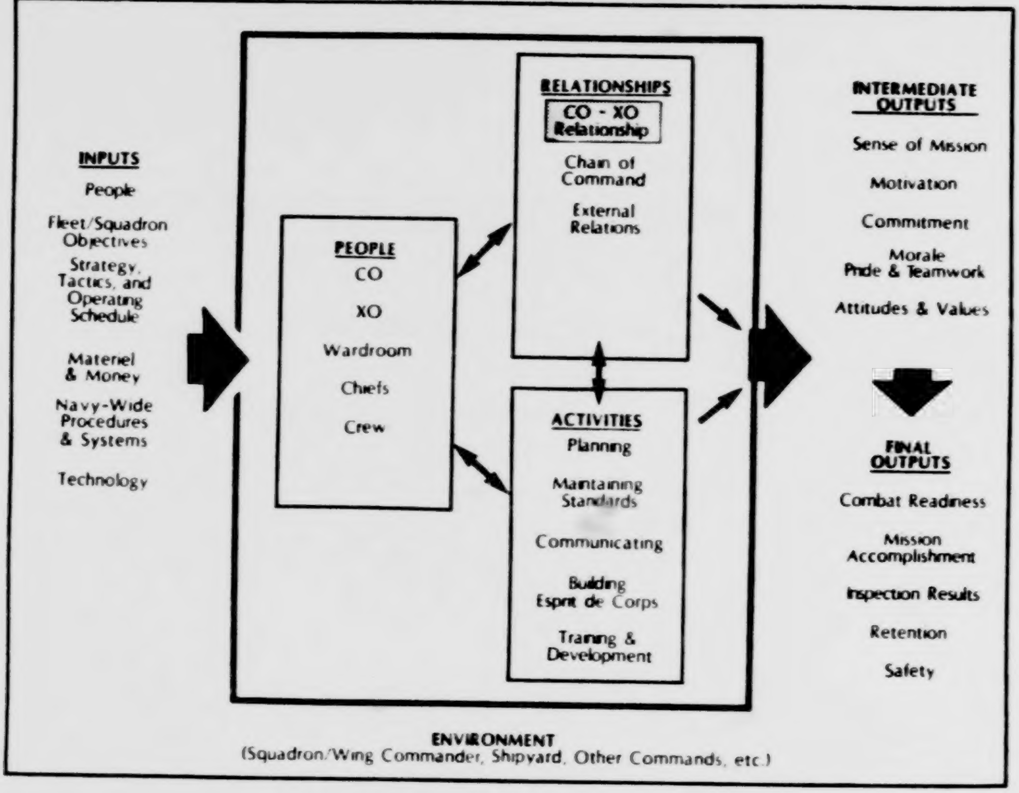
Our study found that there are three key relationships that influence a command's success: the CO-XO relationship, the chain of command, and how the command, particularly the CO, manages the external environment. How well the CO and XO work together as a team affects all aspects of the command's performance. How well a command follows and uses the chain of command and delegates responsibility also determines how successful it will be. And since every command is dependent on outside individuals, groups, and organizations for its success, how a command manages this dependence also contributes to its success or failure. All of these relationships are different in superior commands from relationships in average commands.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER RELATIONSHIP

"Nothing in war is as important as an undivided command."

-- Napoleon I: Maxims of War, 1831

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



CO-XO Relationship

- CO Is in Charge
- XO Stands Behind CO's Philosophy and Policies
- CO and XO Have Well-Defined and Complementary Roles
- CO and XO Communicate Frequently
- CO and XO Respect Each Others' Abilities

THE COMMANDING OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER RELATIONSHIP

How well the CO and the XO work together vitally affects he command. In superior commands the CO and XO work together s a team. We found several characteristics of the CO-XO reationship that enable this teamwork to occur and that disinguish superior from average commands:

- CO Is in Charge
- XO Stands behind CO's Philosophy and Policies
- CO and XO Have Well-defined and Complementary Roles
- CO and XO Communicate Frequently
- CO and XO Respect Each Other's Abilities

O Is in Charge

Superior commands live up to Napoleon's dictum that "Nothng in war is as important as an undivided command." In these ommands, there is no doubt who is calling the shots. Although he CO and XO work together as the dominant coalition in the ommand, it is the CO who leads and the XO who follows. In some f the average commands, the crew felt that it was the XO who as really in charge, with the CO spending a lot of time in his tateroom.

O Stands behind CO's Philosophy and Policies

> "The CO and I discuss a lot of things together. I understand basically where he is coming from and it is my job to try and support him. I don't always agree, and I tell him I don't agree. But when he explains that that's how I am going to do it, that's the way we do it. And we do it as well as we can."
>
> -- Executive Officer (Surface)

In superior commands, the XO actively supports the CO's olicies, philosophy, and procedures. As we have seen, this oes not mean that he always agrees with the CO's views or ecisions. He brings up any disagreements he may have with the O in private. He may even try to convince the CO to change is mind. However, once the decision is made, the XO fully supports the decision regardless of his own preferences. He does not attempt to undermine the CO in any way.

The harmony in the CO-XO relationship in superior units is also often commented on by the crew, who typically use phrases like "a matched pair" or "You couldn't have two guys who are more alike" to describe this relationship.

Although the need for unity between commanding officer and executive officer seems obvious, such harmony is not always found in the less effective commands. In one command, the CO had a strong ethical commitment, while the XO was obviously much less committed. In another command, a pessimistic commanding officer was teamed with an extremely upbeat executive officer, and the XO continually upstaged the CO. In both of these cases, the contrast in styles and philosophies split the command, resulting in a less than total effort from the officers and the crew.

One of the most striking examples of an effective relationship occurred when the CO and the XO had come through the PCO-XO pipeline together. They knew each other's strengths and weaknesses when they walked into the command. Questions about where each one stood had been settled. They came to the command as a unified team and the command benefited from their common vision.

In another case, an executive officer first served under a relatively inflexible, autocratic commanding officer and then under a more open-minded one. Under each commanding officer he explicitly modified his leadership style to match that of the commanding officer.

CO and XO Have Well-defined and Complementary Roles

The COs and XOs of these commands accept the fact that their roles are different and that they must work together to achieve the same goal: accomplishing the mission of the command. In general terms, the CO establishes policy and procedure and holds the XO responsible for implementation. The CO has the big picture; the XO, the nitty-gritty. In most of the superior commands, the CO and XO discuss what their respective roles will be. One XO recalls his first meeting with his CO: "I remember sitting in his room when we first met and talking about his goals. I had certain goals, and I wanted to mesh my philosophy with his and to get his input on the type of relationship he wanted us to have." In this meeting the CO reports that he told the XO: "I don't want you to be a paperwork XO. I want you to be an operations XO. I want you involved in the ship's operations--to run the training program and to watch the navigation team. I also want you to start training yourself to be a CO."

What is important is not that the duties and responsibilities are the same from command to command in the same community, because, as we have seen, each CO emphasizes different areas. Rather, it is that the roles are made clear and are mutually accepted.

CO and XO Communicate Frequently

"The XO and I meet constantly. There's seldom a day that we're not talking to each other by phone or in person." This is typical of the amount of communication between the CO and XO in superior commands. In some commands, the communication is more formal and regular. Most COs meet regularly with the XO early in the morning to review message traffic and plan for the day. In others, it is more informal and more on an as-needed basis. The CO of a submarine says: "We talk to each other all the time. Whenever he wants to talk to me or I want to talk to him, we walk over and talk to each other. There's no formal procedure; we have complete access to each other. My door is always open." In another air squadron, the CO and XO usually tour the shops together on a daily basis.

In addition, the COs of superior commands are continually discussing long-range plans, telling their XOs what's coming up, and getting ideas on how to prepare for upcoming tasks. In turn, these XOs keep the CO informed as to how plans are being carried out, not hesitating to bring to the CO problems that need his attention.

CO and XO Respect Each Other's Abilities

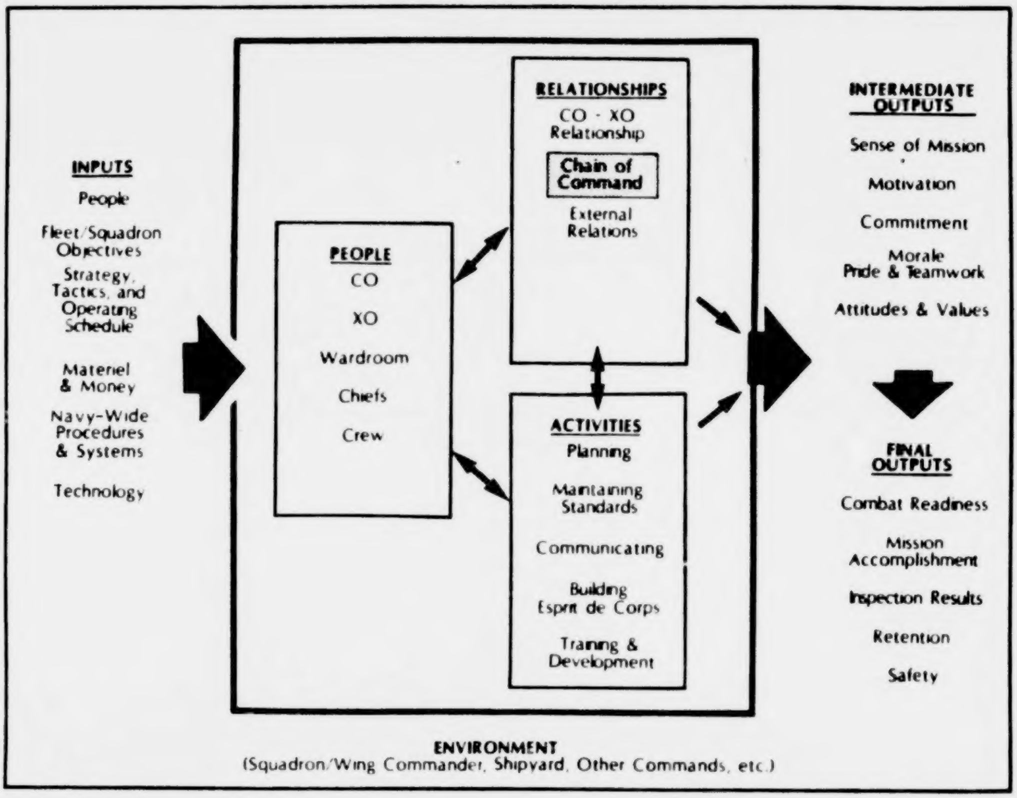
Although the COs and XOs of the superior commands studied are not usually close friends, they do enjoy working together and appreciate each other's strengths. For example, one XO mentioned how he thought his CO was the best pilot he had ever seen. Another CO approvingly describes his relationship with his XO as "a dynamic duo; a one-two punch." In contrast, on one average submarine, the crew was quick to point out that on more than one occasion the CO had belittled the XO in front of the crew, thereby communicating to them his lack of respect for the XO. This profoundly affected morale on the boat. It undermined respect for the XO, and the crew reasoned that if this could happen to the XO, then it could surely happen to them.

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

"Order is Heav'n's first law."

-- Alexander Pope, 1688-1744, Essay on Man, iv

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Chain of Command

- The Chain of Command is Respected, But Flexible
- Information Flows Both Up and Down the Chain of Command
- Responsibility is Delegated

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

The chain of command provides the organizational structure for the Navy. This hierarchy, with each person reporting to someone of a higher rank, establishes authority for decision making, sets the channels for communication flow, and assigns responsibility for carrying out work. It also is through living and working within the chain of command that naval officers and enlisted petty officers learn how to lead their men. It is the experience of moving up the hierarchy and knowing first-hand what it is to obey that forges the mettle of those who know how to command. In this sense, the chain of command enables sailors to live up to the maxim "Learn to obey before you command."

But how does the chain of command really work in superior commands? And does it function differently in average commands? In fact, this study found significant differences between the two. In superior commands:

- The Chain of Command Is Respected, but Flexible
- Information Flows Up and Down the Chain of Command
- Responsibility Is Delegated

The Chain of Command Is Respected, but Flexible

There is no doubt that the chain of command is adhered to in superior commands; at the same time, however, it is flexible. It is never allowed to become a cage that inhibits people from getting the job done. There are two ways in which the chain of command is flexible. First, in special circumstances, such as in a time crunch, someone may bypass a person he is ordinarily supposed to go through. In these cases, however, people in superior commands notify the bypassed person either before the action or immediately afterwards. The other way consists of informal means of communication and influence. However, as one XO emphasized, "You can't go wrong by sticking to the chain of command."

The commitment to following the chain of command starts at the top but is carried out by all levels. One CO who has an open-door policy welcomes anyone who wants to talk to him. But he says:

> If they want to talk to me about a problem in maintenance, then the first thing I'm going to ask them is, "Have you talked to the maintenance chief or the main-

> tenance department head?" They know I'm going to say that to them, so they don't come in here unless they've already done that.

Chiefs in superior commands are especially mindful of following the chain of command. In particular, they object to interference of division officers and department heads in the running of their area. They insist that officers go through them if they want the junior enlisted to do something. One chief reports:

> It's destructive when a division officer or department head interferes with the operation of your division. That happened to me once here. A division officer told one of my guys that he couldn't leave the boat until he got a haircut. When I found out about it, the first thing I did was I told the guy to leave and go get a haircut. The second thing I did, and I usually don't lose my temper, is I called the division officer topside and said to him: "What are you doing telling one of my guys that he has to stay on board until he gets a haircut? If you want one of my men to get a haircut, you tell me, and I'll tell him!"

In one average command, there were significant problems with the chain of command: the department heads were going directly to the LPOs to get work done. After this began happening, the LPOs started bypassing the chiefs and going directly to the officers. Morale was extremely low, especially among the chiefs. They complained that they did not know what their role was on the boat. To make matters worse, people believed that it was the XO who was really running the command. The CO did not walk about but instead stayed in his stateroom much of the time. The XO was a screamer, and attempts by the chiefs to discuss the issue with him and bolster their role were fruitless.

Information Flows Up and Down the Chain of Command

In superior commands, information flows freely and frequently up and down the chain of command. In general, when it is from the top down, information flows in an ordered sequence from higher to lower levels of authority, and the reverse for bottom-up communication.

These commands work hard at putting the word out and listening to people. For example, the department heads realize that the chiefs are the ones most in touch with the day-to-day running of the command and have the most technical know-how, so they actively seek out the input of the chiefs without undermining the authority of the division officers. Similarly, it is the department heads who are closer to the big picture and the plans to implement it, so the chiefs maintain open channels of communication to them through the division officers. In particular, superior commands welcome new ideas and even disagreement over the best way of doing things. They know that this means that people are interested enough to speak up and that, out of the exchange of ideas, the best one will surface. Also, if something is going wrong, they would rather hear about it than not.

The most frequent breakdown of the chain of command occurs at the division officer - chief interface. Because of the inexperience of the division officers, there is a temptation for both the chiefs and the department heads to bypass them. In superior commands, this is realized and steps are taken to ensure that it does not happen. In one command, the CO reduces the managerial duties of his division officers so they can concentrate on becoming qualified and on learning the tremendous amount of information they have to master. Although this allows for the DO's unique situation, it still keeps him in the chain of command. When the division officers are shunted out of the chain of command, their credibility is undermined and they lose the opportunity to learn to lead.

Responsibility Is Delegated

One of the strongest distinctions between average and superior commands is how much work and decision making are delegated to lower levels. This begins with the CO, who focuses on the big picture and then delegates to the XO the task of turning the broad brush strokes into a working plan. The XO in turn delegates to the department heads the task of generating a plan for their department and holds them accountable for the implementation of the final plan. Each successive level then delegates as much as possible to the level below it. This goes all the way down to the work center supervisors, who are given the responsibility for running their own areas.

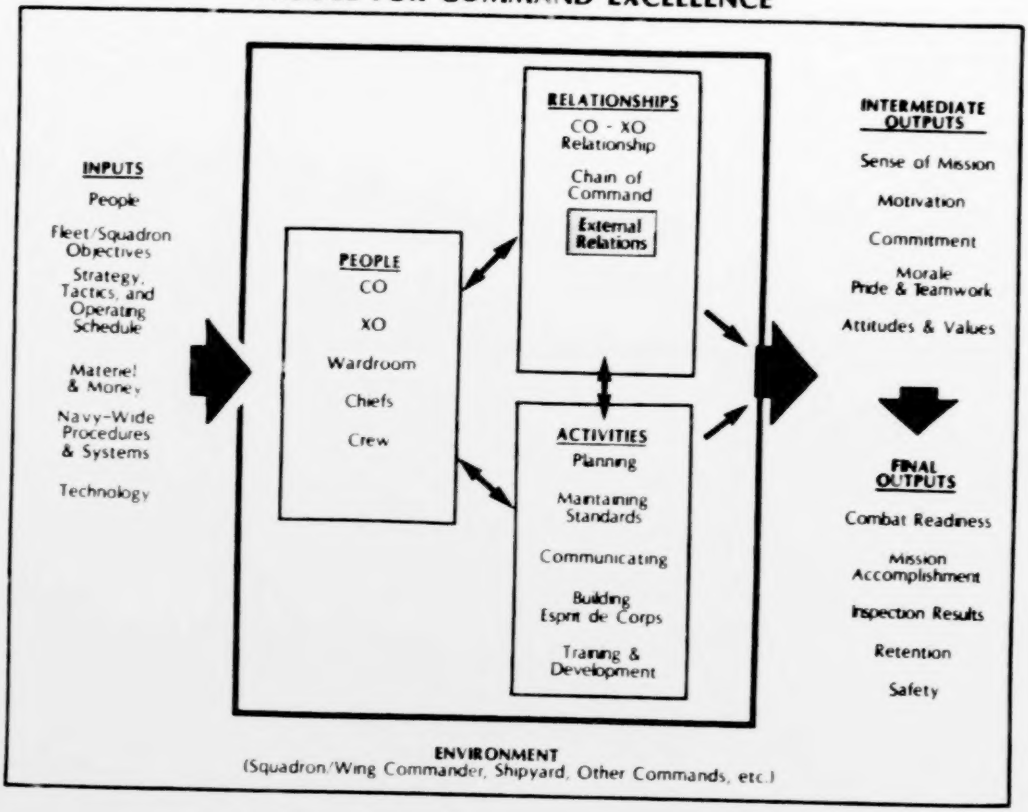
These commands realize the benefits of delegating. Not only is it efficient because time and energy are limited and one cannot do everything; it is smart because it allows the person with the expertise and the one closest to the situation to decide what to do. It also builds morale because people feel trusted and valued: they are more than robots who merely take orders. In addition, it fosters high standards because people take ownership for their areas; they learn that they will receive the credit when things turn out well and the blame when they don't. And through delegation, people develop. They learn how to lead and make decisions, and how to learn from their mistakes. The chain of command is not a democracy; yet it is through delegation that the same kind of commitment to decisions is won.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

"The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

-- Traditional saying

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



External Relationships

- Command Builds Networks with Outsiders
- Command Advocates for Its Interests with Outsiders
- Command Promotes a Positive Image

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Every organization is influenced by the larger environment that surrounds it, and, in turn, it has an impact on that environment. To understand the success or failure of a Navy command, it is necessary to look at the environment within which it exists. This was strikingly illustrated when it was discovered that two of the air squadrons that were identified as superior had won their Battle E when deployed on a carrier that, itself, had won the Battle E. Both of the COs of the air squadrons stated that they could not have been so successful without the support of the carrier. For example, they could not have flown as many consecutive sorties if the supply department on the carrier had not been so well run.

The intent of our study was not to investigate how the outside environment helped or hindered a command; however, it was impossible to ignore the environment because there was a marked difference in how superior and average commands interacted with it. How superior squadrons dealt with the commodore, squadron or wing commander, squadron or wing staff, tenders, the shipyard, contractors, other commands, detailers, and the local community was different from how average commands did. And this difference had a direct impact on their operational performance and combat readiness. Putting it simply, superior commands managed the outside environment while average commands were managed by it.

We previously discussed the role of the CO in building positive external relationships. Here we focus on the management of external relationships by the command as a whole. Here's what superior commands do to build these relationships:

- Command Builds Networks with Outsiders
- Command Advocates for Its Interests with Outsiders
- Command Promotes a Positive Image

Command Builds Networks with Outsiders

Superior commands establish and cultivate a web of relationships with significant people or groups in the external environment and then use those relationships to accomplish their goals. This involves getting information from people, treating them professionally, doing things for them, explaining things, and, in general, being able to influence and work with them successfully. It requires a mindset that sees the larger environment as full of resources rather than obstacles to be avoided or overcome. This is not to say that "outsiders" do not at times make life miserable, but the general orientation in superior commands is how to respond positively in these situations and, preferably, prevent such aggravations from occurring. Having wide and frequently utilized communication links to these "centers of power" makes it possible.

The CO of one air squadron reports that he does not hesitate to call the squadron maintenance officer if he needs help in getting parts. He says this works because "We trust each other." The CO of one surface ship was able to get an experimental computer placed on his ship with a resulting savings in time. He learned of this opportunity through his many contacts at the squadron. He explains:

> I tell my officers and chiefs that it is imperative that their relationships with the squadron staff are good. This is so that we can always get what we need from the squadron. I tell them to ask the squadron to come over here and look at the ship. If they are here, they will see what's happening and feel comfortable about the ship. But you need to take the initiative.
>
> When we pulled into port, the squadron staff did not come to meet the ship as I expected they would. So I said, "All right, guys, march over to the squadron building and introduce yourselves." The squadron was incredulous that this was happening; they were really impressed.

COs and XOs were not the only ones taking this kind of action; there were plenty of examples of chiefs and officers building a network of relationships with outsiders. Here's an example of how a chief was proactive in using his contacts to help his ship get test equipment for a systems readiness test in preparation for a Fleet Operational Readiness Calibration inspection:

> For this test we have to get the test equipment from the tender, but at this time there were two other boats along the pier doing the same tests, so it was very difficult to come by the test equipment. I know a lot of the people on the tender, so I brought some of our equipment there to be calibrated. Then I went to the shops in the shipyard to find out if they had any of the test equipment we needed. I know just about everybody in the shops from before. I used to get out and mingle with the people. They said they didn't have an antenna simulator, but I knew that this other boat had one.

> So I went right down to Combat Systems and explained our situation. They told me that the equipment we needed was on this other boat. Well, I knew Fred was working there, and he and I are friends. He's also one of the most knowledgeable individuals there is on this system. So I went down and chatted with Fred for a little while and brought back their static antenna tester.
>
> I also talked to Fred about our progress on our systems readiness test because some of the other boats were having maintenance problems in trying to finish the test, and I wanted to avoid those problems. He pointed out to us five or six things that we had to do to avoid these problems. There's no doubt we would have flunked that test if we hadn't found these things out.

Command Advocates for Its Interests with Outsiders

Superior commands know how to work the system. They are not shy about asking for help. These commands establish contacts at other commands to recruit good people, talk to detailers to fill billets with the people they want, arrange for technical assists from the squadron, approach local businessmen to help raise money for rec funds, get good schedules for inspections, get needed training opportunities, persuade Disbursing to give out checks when needed, and get materials and services from the shipyard or outside contractors.

In superior commands there is a widespread feeling of ownership for the command and each person's area of responsibility. There is an identification with and protection of the command's interests and welfare. So, when these commands feel that they are not getting a fair shake, they speak up and act to correct it. Here's how an air squadron CO reacted to a maintenance advisory team visit that he thought was not done properly:

> I found out what had happened when I got back and saw a lot of chins dragging. My maintenance people were real upset because they thought this maintenance advisory team, which is supposed to help us improve, had done a hatchet job and put us on report. What I told the guys was, "Hey, you've done great. You're a great squadron. We didn't handle this as well as we could have, but I'll get it sorted out. I'm the interface here. You guys keep on doing your job. Here's what I want you to do. The sun's going to come up tomorrow, so let's press on." And what I had them do was to begin to correct the discrepancies that the advisory team found.

> That was on a Friday, and Friday afternoon I called some people I know at the wing and said that I wanted to see everyone concerned and tell them what happened from our point of view. Two of the commanders over there came here, and I told them, "Take a look at this squadron's records, take a look at a year's worth of data, look at our inspection results, and then tell me that any wing maintenance unit that's supposed to be an advisory team has the right to come in here and hatchet my people! No, that's not right! We've got to resolve this."
>
> And they agreed with me. Soon after that this advisory team came back to see me with their tail between their legs, saying, "Hey, your squadron did great. No problem." The officer who led the team and I sat down and talked about what had happened. We both learned something. So, we successfully turned a negative situation into a positive one.

In contrast, the CO of one average command believed that a tech assist team had conducted themselves as if they were doing an inspection. Even though he did not like this, he made no protest to them but seemed to take his frustration out on his own men, whom he criticized for not doing well.

All of the COs we interviewed resented what they considered unwarranted interference in the running of their command by outside groups, such as wing or squadron staff. Paradoxically, however, the superior commands were best able to chart their own course by having frequent contact with these groups in order to influence them. To avoid them was to become a pawn.

There is a saying that contains part of the secret of how superior commands are able to use external resources so effectively: "If you don't know where you're going, you're liable to end up somewhere else." These commands do this successfully because they have a clear understanding of what their interests are. They have done their homework to develop long- and short-range goals and objectives for the command as a whole and for departments and divisions. They know what they want. With this in their pocket, they can then figure out whom to talk to, how to talk to them, and what to ask for.

Command Promotes a Positive Image

Superior commands believe they are the best and they want other people to know it, so they promote their command to outside groups. They want to be seen in as favorable a light as possible. Several of the COs of superior commands make sure that messages leaving the unit are free of errors because they know that errors will reflect poorly on the command. The same thing holds for cleanliness. They do not just want to be sharp; they want to look sharp. They know that people who tour the command will make judgments about their ability to perform, based on how spic and span the command appears. They make sure that work areas, equipment, mess areas, and berthing spaces all look good.

One submarine we visited liked to do things with a lot of pizzazz. As part of their tactical readiness examination they had to do a war brief. The navigator-ops officer decided to do something special. He explained:

> To prepare for our brief, I went to see how this other boat did theirs, which was not very well. I said, "Why don't we make a slide show for our brief that will knock their socks off! We need to improve our photo capability anyway, so this will give us practice under time pressure." We ended up with about 15 slides in a top secret format. The commodore said it was the best he had ever seen. We've also been asked to do it on the fleet level. It's been good publicity for the command.

Superior commands also work hard at presenting a good image to the civilian community. The men realize that they are diplomats for the command and the Navy. They know that people will judge the command based on their appearance and behavior. Their appearance is sharp, they are polite, and they communicate their pride in their command.

One reason these commands promote a favorable image is given by a CO who says: "If you demonstrate your inability to do your job, you get an awful lot of help in doing it. And that's not the way I want to do business. I want to keep this command off of people's hit lists. I want to solve this command's problems in this command." This requires getting the message that "This command is a top performer" across to the powers that be.

This does not mean that these commands are merely engaged in politicking or that they get recognition for things that they don't really deserve. On the contrary, the promotion of the command has to be backed up with genuine accomplishment.

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

Every Navy command has to perform certain standard tasks or activities. As we indicated in our initial discussion of the organizational model used, we chose to focus on Planning, Enforcing Standards, Building Esprit de Corps, Communication, and Training and Development. These were targeted because they were most often mentioned by the people interviewed as being the most critical activities for successful operation of the command. In addition, they are functions that most organizations need to pay attention to in order to excel.

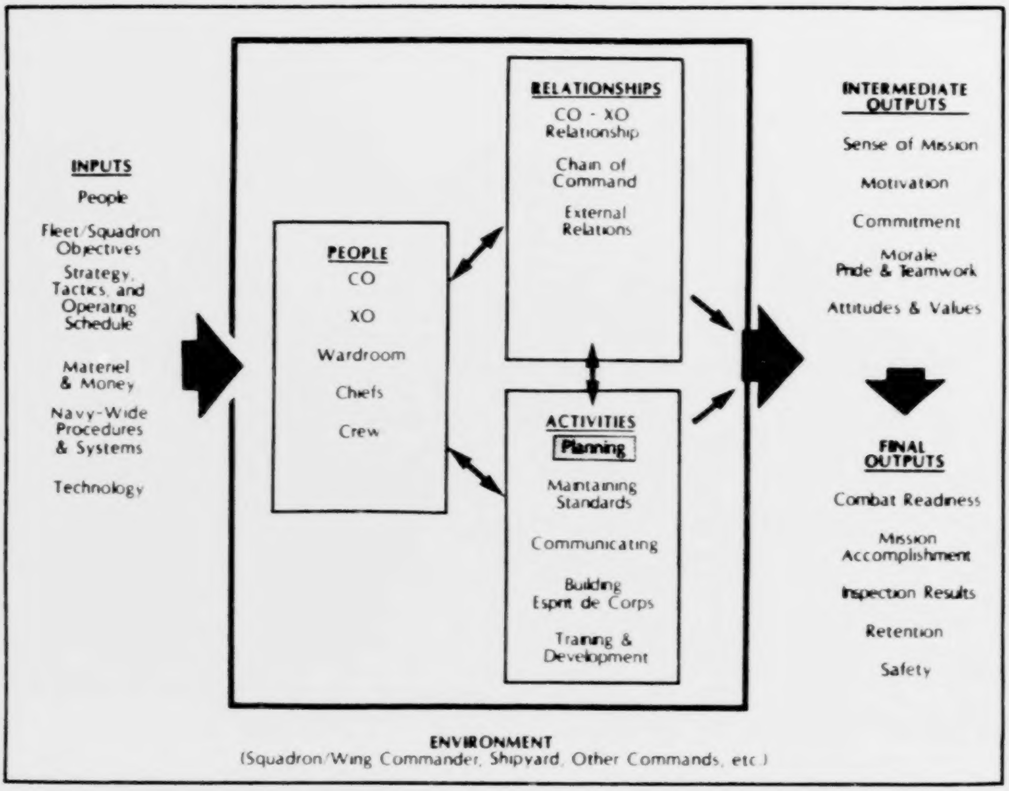
For each activity, we identify those characteristics, or themes, that distinguish superior from average commands. Examples are given for each characteristic. Although examples are cited of how the various command levels perform these activities, the principal focus is on what the CO and XO do.

PLANNING

"If I always appear prepared, it is because before embarking on an undertaking, I have meditated for long and have foreseen what may occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I should do in circumstances unexpected by others; it is thought and meditation."

-- Napoleon I, 1769-1821

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Planning

- Planning is a Regularly Scheduled Activity
- Planning Occurs at All Levels
- Planning is Long-Range
- Plans are Specific
- Plans are Publicized
- Systems are Put in Place to Implement Plans
- Command Makes Every Effort to Stick to the Plan

PLANNING

"If you plan ahead, you can accomplish anything." This observation by one of the COs of a superior submarine captures a major difference between superior and average commands--superior commands do a lot of planning, and they do it well.

Although the best-laid plans of even Battle E winners are waylaid by unforeseen events, the general impression one has of a superior command is of things running in a calm and orderly fashion. These commands look far ahead and prepare for contingencies, whereas the men in average commands often complain of crisis management, of continually having to put out fires.

These top commands know the advantages of effective planning and the disadvantages of poor planning. The resulting uncertainty from the latter takes its toll on morale. For example, often and unexpectedly having to work late disrupts family life and causes resentment. Having to scramble to adjust to a constantly changing schedule adversely affects job performance. And not having a well-defined plan to present to the squadron or wing causes a command to be more vulnerable to outside manipulation.

There are several characteristics that distinguish planning in superior commands from that in average commands. Again, although average commands do some of these things some of the time, superior commands do them consistently. It is the combination of all of these that causes the planning in superior commands to be so effective. Here are these characteristics:

- Planning Is a Regularly Scheduled Activity
- Planning Occurs at All Levels
- Planning Is Long-Range
- Plans Are Specific
- Plans Are Publicized
- Systems Are Put in Place to Implement Plans
- Command Makes Every Effort to Stick to the Plan

Planning Is a Regularly Scheduled Activity

Planning is a regularly scheduled activity in superior commands. The XO on one submarine indicates that he meets weekly with his department heads to plan the following week's training schedule. Besides planning for ongoing events, these commands have special planning sessions for major events, like deployment or upcoming inspections. The CO of a surface ship reports that his command met every evening from 1800 to 1830 for months in advance to plan for an important mission.

Planning Occurs at All Levels

Superior units know that to plan well one must get input from the people with expertise, from those who will carry out the plans, and from those who will be affected by the plans when implemented. This process begins at the top, with the CO explaining in a general way what needs to be done. Then it is up to the XO to formulate a plan and make sure it is carried out. He does this by delegating planning tasks to the department heads. These, in turn, involve their division officers and chiefs. These chiefs get input from their LPOs and work center supervisors. In addition to generating a better plan, this process creates high commitment to making the plan work. It also decreases the likelihood of crisis management, since there is more widespread anticipation of obstacles.

To illustrate this involvement, the engineering officer on a submarine talks about preparations for upkeep after returning from a deployment:

> Our upkeep doesn't officially start until Friday, but we have essentially already done it. We planned it out with the LPOs while we were at sea. I had three meetings with the chiefs, LPOs, and division officers all together. What we did first was to identify all the areas that needed taking care of. They later talked to me individually about their jobs. A few days after that, we all got together to coordinate the effort and resolve any conflicts. Then everyone went and made necessary corrections. The third time we got together, we identified what we still had to do. This session, which was a few days before we pulled in, was basically getting all the details straightened out.

Planning Is Long-Range

"I don't know if it's the XO or his tickler system, but we seem to see our problems a little bit further ahead of time than the other commands I've been in." This statement by a division officer on a surface ship indicates one of the strongest characteristics that distinguishes superior from average commands: their emphasis on long-range planning.

Superior commands plan six months to a year or more in advance. For example, the XO of a fighter squadron describes their planning process:

> We have a long-range planning meeting at least once a month. We take a look at our calendar six months in advance and point out the events that are coming up. We lay every commitment out there on that calendar. Then we break it down into three months ahead. I say, "Okay, we're going to do this, we're going to do that, we're going to take that day off, we're going on a detachment here, and so on."

In order to be successful at long-range planning, a unit needs to get the necessary information on upcoming events. This requires good communication and coordination with outside groups. Approaching the squadron with a well-defined schedule makes life easier for squadron staff; having a good relationship with the squadron or the shipyard, for example, makes putting together a realistic schedule that much easier. So long-term planning and the relationship with the external environment are synergistic. One CO says:

> We take planning very seriously. We have a monthly schedule of events, and we put this out in several forms. One is a list of meetings; another breaks things down by days and months; another is a proposed schedule for shipboard events, mainly including ship's force work which is going to affect other departments on the ship. I then take these over to the Readiness Support Group and tell them: "This is what we have planned. Let's try and dovetail your plans and ours, so that we're not duplicating efforts, or planning to use the same space at the same time." What I'm trying to do is be the dog wagging the tail, instead of the tail that somebody else is wagging.

Plans Are Specific

Superior units know that in order for plans to be effective, they must be specific. They should state who is responsible for what activity, what is to be done and to what standard, and when it should be completed. The CO of one air squadron discusses the planning they did for an off-load:

> We had regular meetings with the people who were involved, probably two or three weeks in advance. We put out our own LOI even though the ship had one. And we assigned responsibilities. One of the most important things I've learned is that you have got to assign responsibilities in writing. The other thing is accountability. You've got to tell people, "This is

> what your job is," and clarify how they're going to do it. There's too much of a tendency to say, "We'll just work it out when we get there.' We had a preliminary meeting and asked: "What sorts of things do we need to be concerned about? What will be problem areas? Who's going to take care of this? Who's going to take care of that?"

Plans Are Publicized

After plans are formulated, superior commands make a special effort to publicize them. They do this in a variety of ways, primarily through the POD. PODs on superior units are clear, accurate, succinct, and specific.

One superior unit distributed a plan of the week, and on the back of it they had the plan for the quarter. In still another command, the XO had monthly calendars prepared with the unit's major events listed. Each page represented a day and had lots of space for making notes. These were distributed to his officers and chiefs, who could rip off a page as that day passed. He encouraged his men to share the calendars with their families, so that they too would know what was coming up.

Systems Are Put in Place to Implement Plans

Superior commands work hard, but they also work smart. They do not constantly reinvent the wheel. When they find that something works or needs to be done regularly, they develop systems or routines to make sure those tasks get done.

One example of this is the use of a matrix planning form by an XO to make sure that evaluations are done on time. The form includes the names of everyone and dates by which the evaluation steps have to be completed. On another ship, officers talk to each person coming up for reenlistment. These talks take place at monthly intervals beginning eight months ahead of time.

Still another example is the goal-setting system used on one frigate. Each week the supervisors must turn in to their chiefs a list of their work goals for the next week. The chiefs then use these to submit a list of goals to their division officer. The procedure is followed on up the chain of command until, finally, the department heads turn in a summary statement of their goals to the XO. They are careful, though, not to make this an exercise in micromanagement--the eventual goal statements include only completion dates.

Command Makes Every Effort to Stick to the Plan

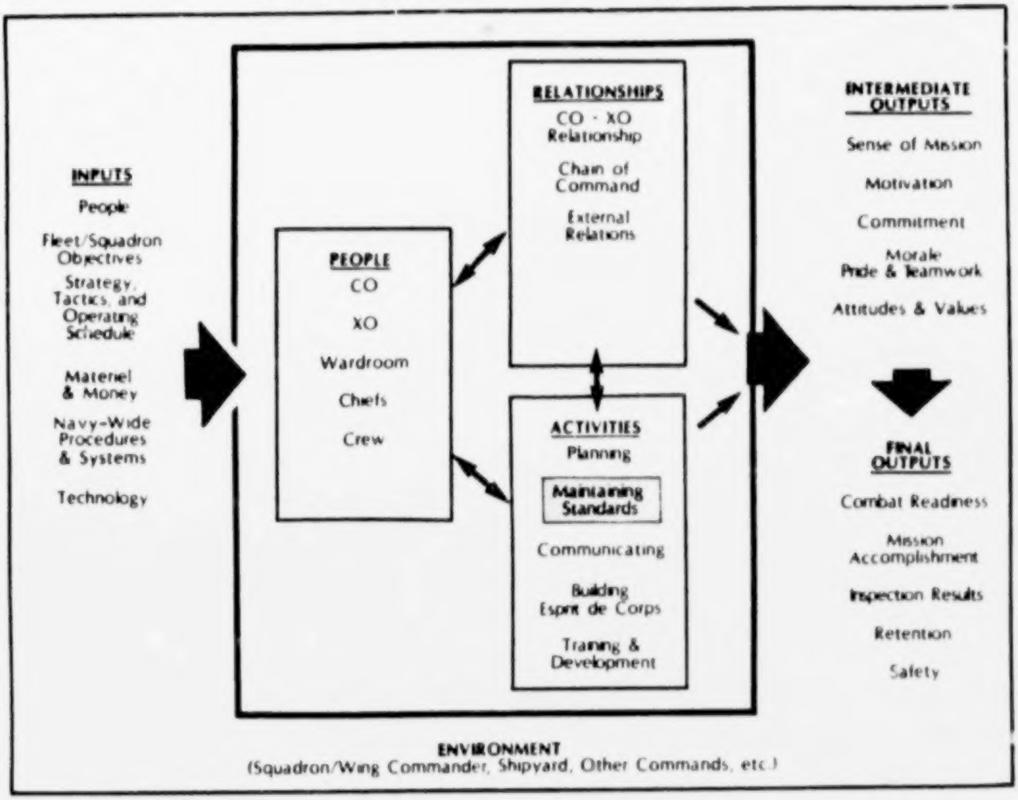
If a superior command goes to the trouble of creating a plan, they make a considerable effort to stick to it. This does not mean that they are rigid and cannot accommodate new data or events. Nor does it mean that they always are able to live up to their plans. It does mean, though, that plans are taken seriously. They appreciate the benefits of having a plan that everyone can count on, even if it means having to endure some hardship to stick to it.

MAINTAINING STANDARDS

" . . . Doing the right thing when there's no one to tell you right from wrong."

-- Traditional Navy saying

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Maintaining Standards

- Standards are Clear and Consistent
- Standards are Realistic and High
- Standards are Continuously Monitored
- Positive and Negative Feedback is Frequently Given
- Performance Problems are Handled Quickly and Appropriately
- All Levels Participate in Enforcing Standards

MAINTAINING STANDARDS

Superior commands pay special attention to establishing, communicating, and enforcing standards. First, they are concerned about job performance standards, knowing that how well they perform affects safety, accomplishing their mission, and, ultimately, the security of our country. But they also act according to General George S. Patton, Jr.'s rhetorical question, "If you can't get them to salute when they should salute and wear the clothes you tell them to wear, how are you going to get them to die for their country?" So they also enforce military standards concerning dress and protocol. Although all superior commands set high standards, they vary in how their standards are established and enforced. As in other areas, this depends mostly on the personality and leadership style of the commanding officer.

Superior commands maintain standards in a way different from average commands. Here's how they do it:

- Standards Are Clear and Consistent
- Standards Are Realistic and High
- Standards Are Continuously Monitored
- Positive and Negative Feedback Is Frequently Given
- Performance Problems Are Handled Quickly and Appropriately
- All Levels Participate in Enforcing Standards

Standards Are Clear and Consistent

In superior units there is no mystery about what the standards are and the consequences of meeting or not meeting them. The men know what the standards are by being told and by observing the behavior of those whose job it is to enforce standards. In these commands, standards are enforced fairly: the same standard is applied equally to all groups and individuals. Particularly in the area of establishing and maintaining standards, the leadership of the CO and XO is decisive. The following observation by one CO captures the sense of clarity and fairness that exists in superior commands:

> There are certain facts of life that exist in this command so that there's no doubt, no equivocation in

> anyone's mind about what the end result is going to be. If you are overweight, you are not going to be advanced. No matter who you are, from XO down to seaman recruit, you aren't going to get ahead until you meet weight and height standards. That's in accordance with Navy directives, but in many commands it sort of slides under the table, or we fib about it. Here, it does not happen that way, and everybody knows it.

The XO in another command points out that either he or the CO meets with every new person, and at that meeting the standards of the command are clarified, especially those regarding drug abuse. He says:

> I emphasize to them the policy on drugs--that if they have any prior experience with drugs, they'd better knock it off right now because we have urinalysis down pat. So I tell them that if they're using them, they are going to get caught. Then, they're going to go to the old man, and they can expect the maximum punishment the first time.

In one superior air squadron, there were complaints from the enlisted that a double standard existed--the regulation that protective headgear be worn while off the ground was being enforced for enlisted personnel but not for officers. As a result, the CO, through his safety officer, made sure that the regulation was enforced impartially.

Standards Are Realistic and High

> "We are the best!"
>
> "We're going to do it, and we're going to do it better than anybody else can. There's nothing that we can't do."
>
> "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing right."

Time and again when visiting superior commands, we heard statements like those quoted above. Top commands want to be the best. Starting with the CO, these commands do not accept second-rate or even average performance. Some of this desire is bound up with a keen sense of competition that permeates the whole crew--of wanting to beat another squadron at the consecutive number of sorties off the carrier or getting more missile hits in a target shoot or even having a bigger rec fund than other commands. But not all of it is competition. A lot of it is just the desire to do things right--and to do them right the first time. These men know that mistakes may come back to haunt them in the form of malfunctions, safety problems, low inspection scores, or not being able to accomplish their mission. It's the determination to be the best that causes them to excel, which, in turn, fuels their pride in being the best.

Here's an example of these high standards in action. The senior chief of an aviation squadron is describing what happened when he took over as chief of the quality assurance division:

> When I took over, the files, the paperwork, the whole way of doing business was in a mess. There was no schedule, no monitoring, hardly anything. When I pointed out to the people in maintenance control an omission in the log book, they really gave me a hard time. I told them we were going to do what the book says, which called for an audit. So that's what we did. We eventually rewrote the entire quality assurance program to make it in accordance with the maintenance manual.
>
> When we started out, we had a hard time passing Wing inspections for corrosion control. We barely skinned by on pre-cruise, but had progressed to the point of getting two excellents and three outstandings on the mid-cruise. But I wasn't satisfied with that, so we revamped and refined. I assigned each person a task and was available to them if they had problems. On the post-cruise inspection, we got five outstandings. So we went from just barely satisfactory to a solid outstanding.

Although superior commands aim high, their standards are realistic. Based on an accurate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, they set goals that are challenging but attainable. In the example above, it would have been unrealistic for this chief to try to go from barely satisfactory on the pre-cruise to all outstandings on the mid-cruise. Publicly announcing this and pushing his men to achieve it would have been a high-risk strategy with demoralization as the probable result. However, going from a mix of excellents and outstandings to all outstandings was a reasonable goal to shoot for. On one average sub the crew attributed part of their low morale to the fact that the standards were so high that it was difficult to become qualified.

Standards Are Continuously Monitored

Superior commands don't just tell people what's expected and then assume that things will be done right. They are constantly monitoring how well things are going, and they are on guard for problems that may arise.

A lot of this occurs because the officers and chiefs walk about and chat informally with their men. Much of it also happens through more formal programs. For example, although all commands have some system for monitoring progress towards becoming qualified, at the suggestion of one of his chiefs, the CO on one ship started a qualifications delinquent program, in which the LPOs decide among themselves which crew members are delinquent. These names are then listed in the POD and the crew members are required to muster on Saturdays for two hours of additional training. The muster is done by the duty chief or the chief of the watch, so the program involves the chiefs and gains their commitment.

Monitoring is done not only to catch problems with current or past performance but also to prevent problems from occurring in the future. The CO of an aviation squadron talks about three new pilots they got after they won the Battle E:

> We just got three aviators who I think are going to be very weak around the ship, one in particular. I've got to watch them very closely and maybe put a Field Naval Aviation Board on one of them to see if he should continue flying. We knew they were weak by their grades coming out of the RAG, so we sent them for a little carrier qual training, and that confirmed our fears. Their performance on landing on a carrier was poor, so we're going to have to monitor them very closely and work with them real hard.

What distinguishes the monitoring of standards in superior commands from that in average commands is that it is an ongoing, day-to-day activity. In average commands, the monitoring seems to ebb and flow in time with the cycle of inspections. When there is no inspection coming up, things seem to slip a little; as an inspection draws near, things are scrutinized more. You get a sense of this "ingrained" quality from an XO's account of his daily inspection of the mess and berthing compartments on his ship:

> We have exacting specifications put on them that their racks, their lockers, or whatever are maintained to boot camp standards, which is higher than a lot of other ships. We started that in precommission days and have just continued it.
>
> If I go into a berthing compartment in the morning and there are three or four bunks that are not made to exact specifications, then this will be pointed out to these individuals via their department head. They will then have to go back and correct that by noon.

> If you start the morning off with the individual making his bed and making sure that everything is shipshape, he will carry that throughout the day--that everything he does requires the same exactness and perfection that he started the day off with.

Positive and Negative Feedback Is Frequently Given

A striking difference between average and superior units is the preponderance of positive feedback in the outstanding commands. The officers and senior enlisted go out of their way to find something positive to say about their men's performance, even if it isn't entirely satisfactory. They don't ignore the weaknesses, but they know that they will get better results by focusing on what has been done right.

A good example of this quality in the context of realistic goals is how the CO of a submarine responded when his men got an above average on an ORSE:

> I had told the men to just train to do the best they could. We came close to getting an excellent but only got an above average. The engineering department was devastated; they thought they had really screwed up. It took me about a week to convince them that above average is a super grade. Hey, less than ten percent get above average. So, here you have this crew who got an excellent on the ORSE the previous year and an excellent on their last TRE, and they're walking around saying, "Gee, we didn't do so well this year."
>
> Well, after the exams, I always get them together and tell them how good they did. So, I got everyone together on the mess decks and told them they had done a super job. And the commodore came down and also told them they had done a super job. I was a little disappointed because we screwed up on just a few technical errors. But not to the point that I would say that to the crew. After all, we had done this well with brand new engineering officers, and we only had a few months to get ready because we had been in the yard for five months before that. So I was pretty happy with our performance.

One might think that average commands give more negative feedback than superior commands. But this also is not true. Because superior commands are so "standards conscious," they promptly tell people when they are not performing up to snuff. Indeed, one difference seems to be that in the superior commands telling people when they are not doing things right is almost an obligation. Their committment to upholding standards tugs at people to get them to speak up--even to their superiors--when they don't think things are as they should be. In average commands, more misses and near-misses are tolerated.

To get people to improve their performance, at least three things have to happen. First, they need to be told what's wrong. Second, they need to be told what they have to do to get it right. This is the "how-to" or "who can help you?" part. And there also needs to be created the desire to improve.

We saw more examples in average commands of people being told they had screwed up, without follow-up help being offered. It was not made clear to them what they had to do to get from poor performance to acceptable or excellent performance. On one submarine, an LPO told his chief he was having a problem writing a report that was due in a few days. The chief handed him a book and told him to figure out how to do it. When the report was two days late, the chief began yelling at the LPO for not knowing how to write the report. In a superior command, the chief would have explained to the LPO what needed to be done or would have helped him learn how to use the book. In superior commands, officers and enlisted take the time to explain what needs to be done and make more of an effort to help the person after giving negative feedback.

Superior commands are more adept also at giving negative feedback in a way that creates a positive general climate and the individual motivation for the recipient to want to change his behavior. The way negative feedback is given in average commands sometimes leaves a person feeling resentful or even humiliated. For example, a chief on one sub reports how the XO chewed him out in front of several petty officers, going so far as to insult and even curse him. The chief later confronted the XO in private. When it happened several more times, the chief put in for a transfer. This is not to say that people don't get chewed out and hollered at in superior commands. But there is more emphasis on the specific behavior that needs changing. Although reprimanded, they are left with their dignity intact.

Performance Problems Are Handled Quickly and Appropriately

When superior commands become aware of poor or unacceptable performance, they act quickly and fairly. For poor job performance, feedback and counseling is given. If that doesn't work, the individual is moved out of his job into another one in which he will do better. If that is not possible or still does not work, the person is fired. The overriding criterion in these cases is what's good for the command, not what's good or pleasant for the person.

The chief in one superior submarine talked about how he dealt with a petty officer who was not doing his job and was constantly complaining about the long hours drilling in preparation for deployment. He says:

> First, I figured it was an attitude problem, because this guy knew how to do the job. I sat down with him and asked him questions like: "What do you think about the way we're preparing for the inspection? Do you think we're giving too many lectures? Do you think we're spending too many hours drilling?" And all I'd get was that everything was screwed up. So I went over our schedule and tried to show him that we had much less time than it appeared because there are only certain things you can do in port.
>
> Well, my philosophy is you counsel first and confront second. When things didn't improve, I told him he had an attitude problem and that he'd better do something to change it. After that, the engineering officer spoke to him and finally the captain saw him. The captain's counseling finally got him to shape up.

In another air squadron with a reputation for poor performance, a maintenance chief had been recruited and given the job of turning around his department's performance. When he arrived and looked at the aircraft and the books, he was disgusted. He felt that the supervisors had a poor attitude--they had no pride in what they were doing. He was unable to get several of the supervisors to cooperate, so he fired them. In contrast, the CO of one average submarine reported having repeated problems with his navigator. He went to the commodore and complained about the man but did not have him removed.

Although every command has XOI and Captain's Mast, we found reactions to them varied in superior and average commands. In average commands, there seemed to be more complaints that discipline was either too lax or too harsh and, in particular, was inconsistent. Justice in superior commands was seen as fast, fair, and firm.

Superior commands have well-oiled mechanisms in place for handling discipline problems in a timely and routine fashion. In one aviation squadron, the Chiefs Disciplinary Review Board examined the case of a yeoman who had not been doing his job with sufficient attention and dispatch. They gave him EMI, and things improved. Then he mistakenly threw away a large amount of the day's message traffic--unfortunately including the notification that they had won the Battle E! This time the Chiefs Board recommended XOI. The XO found the charges substantiated, and he was brought before Captain's Mast the next day.

COs of these commands are also not afraid to make tough decisions that communicate their commitment to standards. The CO of one helicopter squadron, for example, learned that a man who was supposed to get frocked to be a second-class petty officer that afternoon had gotten a DWI the night before. As a consequence, he refused to frock him, despite grumbling from the crew. Shortly thereafter, a sailor from the same division was nominated for Sailor of the Month, and the next day he got a DWI. The CO refused to select him for the award.

All Levels Participate in Enforcing Standards

In superior commands enforcing standards is a consciousness that more fully permeates the entire command. It's not something that only a few people do. In average commands, all the elements of maintaining standards that we have identified above occur more sporadically. There is not the command-wide commitment that there is in top units.

This commitment starts at the top with the CO and XO, who communicate their expectations to the officers, chiefs, and crew. The CO of one air squadron emphasizes to his officers and chiefs that he expects them to give out EMI and to not always pass the buck to him to do it. He also reports the following incident:

> A situation had come to me at Captain's Mast in which two third-class petty officers got in a fight in one of the shops. I looked over at this guy who was a witness and was telling me what had happened, and I said, "Who are you?" He said he was a second-class petty officer, and I said, "You're a second-class petty officer and you let this go on down there?" And he didn't have anything to say. No comment. He didn't attempt to step in and say, "I'm senior, and we're going to stop this" or "You in that corner, you in that corner." Nothing. So I stopped the proceedings and sent him back outside, had him given his rights, and convened XOI on him. That's the way I feel about it. If it's your job, do it. Don't pass it on to somebody else.

In another unit the engineering officer talks about how the men in his present command work differently from men on boats he's been on in the past:

> If you have a job for them to do, they don't procrastinate; they go out and do it. You don't have to do the detailed supervision that you normally see. The LPOs have the same attitude that I do, which is, "If it's broke, you fix it." They are very conscientious

> about their equipment. If they have a problem, they usually come to me and tell me, instead of my finding the problem and telling them to correct it. It's nice because it means they are out in their spaces checking things. I guess they care about what goes on.

This participation also extends to standards involving protocol and appearance. For example, a chief in one command talks about how his men monitor their performance on their own. They periodically get together as a group and give each other feedback on how they are maintaining their equipment or what their appearance is like, including whether or not someone needs a haircut.

In contrast, a chief in an average submarine reports being dismayed about the lack of command-wide commitment to standards. He says:

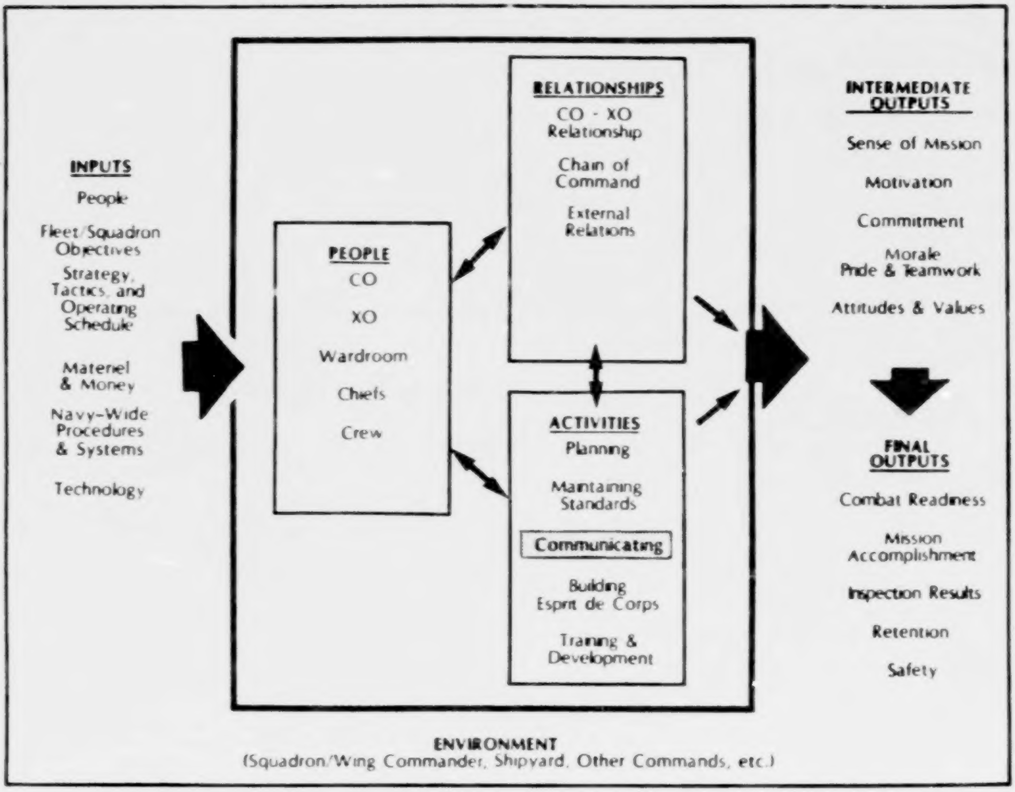
> I saw that sometimes a chief would tell, say, a third-class to do something and the guy would say, "____ off, man, I'm not going to do it." And the chief wouldn't say anything. So I said to this chief, "Wow, that guy just told you to ____ off and you just turn around and walk away from him." He said, "Why should I write him up? It won't do any good." I told him that he didn't have to write him up, that there were other things he could do. To which he replied, "Yeah, but the command won't let you do this and the command won't let you do that. So forget it."
>
> Well, it wasn't long after that that this same third-class told me to ____ off when I told him to do something. I grabbed him and chewed him out and told him he was going to get some EMI. Then I took him to his chief. I told this chief what had happened and that he had better talk to this guy, and all he said was "Oh yeah?" and let the guy go away. And he then told me I didn't need to give him EMI. I said, "Yes I do. You guys might let him get away with it, but I'm not going to stand for it." So I gave him EMI, and a few days later the third-class came down and apologized to me. I haven't had any problems with him since then.

COMMUNICATING

"The power to command has never meant the power to remain mysterious."

-- Ferdinand Foch, Precepts

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Communicating

- Communication Occurs Frequently
- People Listen to Each Other
- Explanations are Given Often
- Communication Flows Up, Down, and Across the Chain of Command
- Officers and Chiefs Get Out and About
- Personal Issues are Discussed

COMMUNICATING

If communication is not successful, then none of the other activities necessary for command excellence will be successful. We found marked differences in communication between superior and average commands. There are differences in interpersonal communication and in organizational communication, or that occurring between groups within the command, such as department heads and division officers or chiefs and petty officers. Superior commands also communicate with their outside environment more effectively than do average commands.

These are the characteristics of communication in superior commands:

- Communication Occurs Frequently
- People Listen to Each Other
- Explanations Are Given Often
- Communication Flows Up, Down, and Across the Chain of Command
- Officers and Chiefs Get Out and About
- Personal Issues Are Discussed

Communication Occurs Frequently

When asked to explain why his frigate won the Battle E, one chief answered, "We talk a lot to each other." Superior commands seem explicitly to value communication more than average commands do. They realize, for example, that to plan well people must communicate well. This involves communicating the big picture: deciding what needs to be done, when, and how; getting the necessary input from the right people; sending LOIs; writing memos; getting information from outside groups, like the shipyard or contractors; counseling people for retention; resolving disagreements; letting one division know what the other is doing--and a thousand and one other interactions. All of these are like links in a chain: if one piece of communication is not effective, it weakens the whole chain.

Superior commands use a variety of means to make sure the right people get the right message at the right time. These include face-to-face conversations, meetings, the 1MC, memos, quarters, captain's call, the POD, night orders, newsletters, and posters. The commanding officer of an air squadron describes how he gets the message out for important events:

> For major evolutions, I do more than just the standard quarters or all-officer meeting. I also have monthly meetings with the crew. Usually I meet with a vertical cut but sometimes with a horizontal cut. For example, sometimes I meet with duty section 1, duty section 2, duty section 3, and duty section 4. Sometimes I'll meet with all of the third class, second class, first class, the chief petty officers, and the officers.
>
> For the fighter derby I have monthly meetings with everyone involved--that's usually around 40 people. We specifically describe what the derby is about, their part in it, and how we're going to attack what we have to do. So, for major evolutions, they hear it at quarters, from their branch and division officer, and they hear it directly from me in these briefings.

In superior commands, the plan of the day (POD) is a central means of communication. The POD is clear, complete, and accurate. It often contains reminders of long-range events. It also is issued early enough the day before to help people plan for the next day. In these commands, people know they can rely on the POD to find out what is happening.

In some average commands, the POD is guilty until proven innocent. People feel that they have to double-check to ensure that scheduled evolutions will really happen. In one command, people routinely call in around 1800 to find out what time they have to report for duty the next day because they do not trust the POD. In some of these commands, the POD is issued late in the day, thus diminishing its usefulness.

People Listen to Each Other

In superior commands people at all levels realize the importance of listening. They are not always telling people what to do or acting like they have all the answers. They know that listening improves decision making and enhances morale. It produces more effective decisions because one gets a variety of perspectives, and it opens the channel for the person who is closest to the situation to give his input. When people are listened to, they feel that they are valued and their level of commitment to a decision is high.

Time and again we heard this reflected in the comments of the crew regarding the CO and XO of superior commands. One of the first things they would say about them when we asked what they were like was: "He's real human; it's easy to talk to him. He never makes you feel like he's talking down to you." One officer said of his CO: "I've never seen him angry at me. I have no fear of telling him why something happened." And another said simply: "He doesn't play Kill the Messenger."

Most of the COs and XOs of superior commands have open door policies, but some go even further. The CO of one top command does not even wait for people to approach him. As time permits, he schedules about three request masts a week and tries to see one or two people every day. Aware that most of the men who request to see him have a complaint about something, he works hard at listening and defusing confrontations by showing that he is personally interested in each man's welfare.

Listening is a norm throughout superior commands. Here is the executive officer of a surface ship describing why he thinks things are unique on his command:

> There is something unique about the people on this command that starts in the chiefs quarters and works its way on down. In the chiefs quarters there is a very open path of discussion--a two-way path. They don't just respect each other's opinion; they seek out each other's opinion. They seek out from each other a determination on how something is going to be done and when. That filters down to the second- and first-class petty officers. They give their input to the chiefs, who consider it.
>
> In other commands I've been on, the petty officers don't say anything. Here they take an active part. They will speak up if they have a question or idea on how to do something. And we listen--because they have something to tell you that they are proud of.

When asked to identify those things that enabled his command to be outstanding, one command senior chief singled out high morale and teamwork. When asked what he does to bring that about, he answered:

> People aren't afraid to come to me with anything. That's essential because if you go around scaring people off, you have shot yourself right out of the saddle. I have to be able to get them to listen to me and me to listen to them. You can't possibly put out policies without ears.

Explanations Are Given Often

In superior commands, the people in charge give frequent explanations to those below them. Although giving a lot of explanations takes more time upfront, as opposed to just ordering someone to do something, superior commands realize that people will be able to work smarter, more efficiently, and with greater commitment if things are explained. Here's the XO of a submarine reflecting on the importance of explaining things:

> Instead of just having officer call, we have officer-LCPO call. In that way we get the information out to more people. So at the division level there will be two guys, the division officer and the LCPO, who know the information and the reasons for what we're doing. This goes back to my philosophy that the more people that know what is happening and have the background information, the better it is.
>
> I believe that if someone knows why we're doing something and when, then even if he doesn't like it, he'll do it. If you tell somebody, "Do this because I said to do it," very likely he'll throw his hands up and say, "Sure, I'll do that." But he'll wander off for 20 minutes and maybe then start doing something.
>
> I remember how I felt when I was a junior officer and didn't get much information. I had to support the ship's policies as a division officer, and I wasn't really sure why I was supporting them. I want my division officers and LCPOs to know the background information so that they'll know why they're supporting this command's policies.

From another perspective, here's the admin officer in an air squadron talking about the value to him of having things explained:

> Knowing what's expected of us helps make this unit effective. Of course, knowing what we're going to be doing is sometimes just a best guess. But it even helps to know that. I like to know what we've got planned a week or two in advance so I can set my priorities. I think the troops also would like to know a few weeks in advance what we've got planned. I don't mind working every day for the next ten days straight if you tell me that in two weeks we're going to take a few days off.

Another example is an aviation squadron deployed on a carrier in the Middle East during a tense political situation. The CO and XO spent a lot of time explaining the political situation and why they were there. The CO also acknowledged the crew's feelings about possibly going into combat and talked about his own reactions when he was in Vietnam. And while the pilots were flying their missions, the CO and XO regularly made tours of the shops to explain the mission to the men there, keep them informed about how things were going up top, answer questions, and tell them what a great job they were doing. The CO also had the air crews visit the shops to let the men know what was happening topside and to tell them how good a job they were doing.

In one average command we visited, morale among the troops was very low. One of their complaints was that the schedule was constantly changing and they had been deployed for a much greater time than is usual for their type of boat. There was considerable bitterness expressed towards the CO for continually volunteering for last-minute missions. When we asked the men why they had spent so much time at sea or why they had done so many of these missions, there was little agreement or clarity. The chain of communication had somewhere broken down.

We visited another submarine, which also had been at sea more than usual. But the morale on this boat was upbeat. They were returning from three months at sea and were scheduled for a two-month, Christmas-holiday standdown. The men were eagerly looking forward to an easy schedule in the days before Christmas. One week before arriving in port, though, the CO was asked to take on another mission, which he accepted. He immediately met with the officers and chiefs to explain the change in schedule and why it was important for them to accept this mission. This was followed by an explanation to the crew as to what they would be doing and why. The crew openly expressed their disappointment but said they were ready to go. They said it was easier to accept the last minute change because they felt the CO understood their disappointment, had let them know immediately, and had explained why it was necessary.

Communication Flows Up, Down, and Across the Chain of Command

Because communication is a matter of sending and receiving messages, each management level in a command can be seen as a message relay station. For communication to be successful throughout the command, each level must receive and transmit the message quickly and accurately. On superior commands, communication flows more freely and clearly up, down, and across the various management levels.

These commands also know that it is just as important that comunication flow up the chain of command as down. Starting with the CO, the norm is established that if someone sees a problem, thinks there's a better way to do something, or has a question, then the command wants to hear it. It was this willingness of his command to have people speak up and provide alternative perspectives that led one chief to say: "Playing the devil is advocated here." This behavior is premised on the command's respect for its men's judgment and expertise. It's also a smart use of resources, since often the person who is raising a question or suggesting another way is the person most intimately involved with the situation. Furthermore, they know that getting input generates commitment to a decision.

It was a breakdown in the flow of communication up and down the chain of command that led to one submarine's average performance. When the CO took over, he emphasized he wanted his division officers to become as technically knowledgeable as possible. Whenever they came to him with a problem, he would ask them what the technical manuals said. The way this got communicated to the chiefs was that if there was a problem and a chief made a suggestion on how to fix it, the division officers frequently said, "Okay, I understand what you think, but what does the book say?" The message the chiefs got from this was that the CO and officers did not respect their knowledge and ability. Because of this and the fact that the department heads began more and more to go directly to the LPOs, the morale of the chiefs plummeted. They felt they were not being listened to and were confused about their role on the boat. They started staying in the chiefs quarters more, became cynical, and stopped making suggestions and taking initiative.

Superior commands also communicate well across departments and divisions. They are aware of the tendency of certain splits to develop, and one way they prevent this is by making sure people are talking to each other. One submarine promoted this kind of communication in preparing for an ORSE by making checklists of things that needed to be done and then having people from other departments go over each department's preparations. In one air squadron, all of the department heads tried to meet together regularly, knowing that effective performance requires good coordination between departments.

Coordination problems between departments and divisions are more common in average commands. Divisions and departments tend to feel that others are not pulling their fair share of the burden or that they are not getting enough recognition. What often happens in these situations is that the division or department starts putting itself--not the command as a whole--first. Then the pattern of noncommunication becomes even more entrenched.

Officers and Chiefs Get Out and About

Officers and chiefs in superior commands also frequently walk about. The safety officer of an air squadron explains what he does when he's out and about:

> I try to get to most of the shops every day. When I'm there hopefully someone will say, "I meant to ask you about this," or "How come we're doing this?" The

> other thing is, I can ask, "What do you think about this?" or "What do you want to do about this?" Another thing I'm doing is making sure the safety chief is hitting on the things he's supposed to be doing. I make sure he takes a look at the line every day. I make sure he checks the fire extinguishers every day. Part of my day is also putting out the word on some item. It might be off the message board or a call from the FITWING safety officer or from the enlisted safety council. And I'm always checking on the flight schedule, making sure they're not screwing it up. I'm like the watchdog of the schedule; every day I put myself in the watchdog position.

A master chief on a submarine likens his position to a plant foreman. He says: "The plant foreman doesn't sit at his desk all the time. He's out moving around and making sure that everything throughout the plant is running right. And that's what I'm doing."

Getting out and about, though, is not looking over people's shoulders and telling them how to do their jobs. In average commands walking about doesn't occur as frequently, and when it does, it turns into getting into people's knickers. In a superior command, for example, if an officer is walking about and sees a discrepancy, he usually does not step in and correct it himself. Instead he notifies the proper person to take care of it unless it constitutes a threat to someone's safety.

In contrast, the CO of one average submarine walked about a lot, but he was constantly questioning his men to test their technical knowledge of their equipment. If they could not answer his questions, he would chew them out and give them a lecture on the right answer then and there. If a piece of equipment was down, it was not uncommon for him to get involved in repairing it. Although his men respected the range of his technical knowledge, they resented his continually putting them on the spot. They felt so intimidated when he was around that they said they often performed below their potential in his presence.

Personal Issues Are Discussed

Superior commands realize the importance of learning about personal difficulties and helping people overcome them. They do this for two reasons. First, they believe that everyone has something to contribute and that the command is a family where everyone's welfare is important. Second, it's based on the awareness that personal distress affects job performance. If people are continually worried about marital, financial, or health problems, these worries take away from their energy and ability to do the job. These commands are not only willing to put in the time to talk about such issues, but they are also on the lookout for clues that someone may be struggling with a personal matter. In particular, they take a lot of pride in turning someone around--helping someone who was considered incorrigible and molding him into a star performer.

This is most common with the chiefs, who often spend time counseling their men on personal issues. One chief estimates that about 60 percent of his time is spent counseling his men on personal issues. Here's the chief in an air squadron describing his and the command's efforts to turn around a young man who was new to their squadron:

> We were real concerned when he came to the squadron because he had tried to commit suicide a few times and it seemed he had taken just about every drug possible before he joined the Navy. We worked with him a lot; we gave him a lot of personal guidance and motivated him. And it wasn't just me. Two other chiefs and a petty officer talked to him a lot. We even talked to the skipper about him, too. At first, we just kept him in sight because we thought he might jump off or something like that. We tried to make him feel a part of the organization--that he was important and that he was wanted here.
>
> A lot of times I'd just go grab him and say, "Come on, I want to show you something on this airplane." And we'd get to talking, and I'd ask him what he was doing before he got in the Navy. That's how we got to talking about this drug thing; it was just through informal talk.
>
> Today, I'd put him up against any plane captain in the Navy. In fact, the skipper has a couple of letters of congratulations on him. But I think the biggest thing we did--and what a lot of people miss--is caring. You've got to care about these kids. You've got to make sure that they're taken care of. If you don't do that, you haven't done your job. It takes a personal touch.

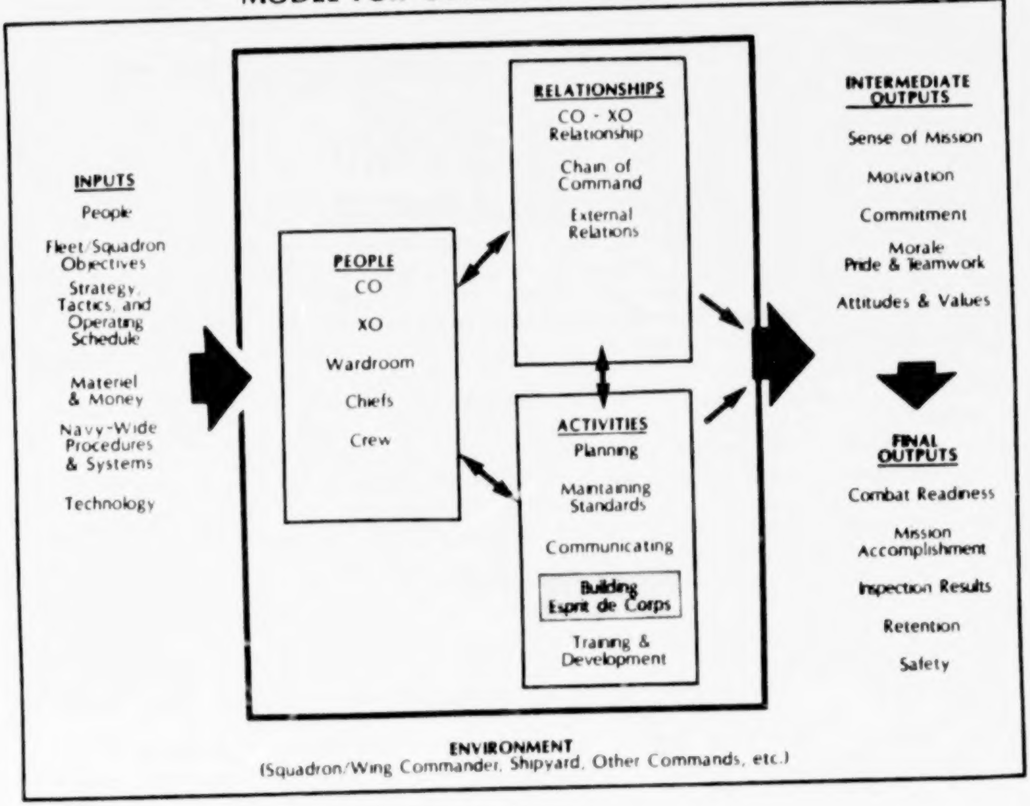
Although superior commands do make this strong effort to help people deal with personal problems and to turn around problem performers, they also know when to cut bait. They do not sacrifice accomplishing the command's goals for the sake of soul-saving.

BUILDING ESPRIT DE CORPS

"There will be no liberty on board this ship until morale improves."

-- Excerpt from a Plan of the Day

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Building Esprit de Corps

- Positive Regard and Expectations Occur at All Levels
- Teamwork is Promoted
- Morale is Monitored
- Rewards and Recognition are Given Frequently
- Command Integrates Incoming Crew Quickly
- Command Focuses on Successes
- Command Encourages Social Activities and Having Fun
- Symbolic Activities Used to Promote Esprit

BUILDING ESPRIT DE CORPS

One of the most immediately noticeable differences between superior and average commands is their esprit de corps. Although the research teams visiting the various commands were not told which ones were identified as superior and which ones as average, the differences were obvious. In some we were greeted warmly and enthusiastically. People at all levels welcomed us. Their liveliness and sharpness were contagious. In these commands, if we appeared lost, people would ask if we needed help. They also appeared relaxed, and there was a lot of good-natured ribbing. Things seemed to move in an orderly and calm way. Things were under control. In these commands, we often received informal invitations to go to sea with them, or they might say, "It's too bad you couldn't join us for our next mission." Invariably, these turned out to be the best commands.

In other commands, though, the feel or mood was different. In a few, we had the sense that we were being tolerated as opposed to welcomed. Walking around, one sensed a flat or even sullen mood. In our group discussions with junior enlisted, there would be frequent complaints and frustration expressed. Sometimes, people openly disparaged the command--not just one or two people, as one will find in any command--and there was much more cynicism and a lot less smiling. Drills were more disorganized and lackadaisical, or, at the other extreme, people often seemed to be looking for something they couldn't find. There was also a subtle aura of tension, a sense that people were playing catch-up and were worried they'd be caught doing something wrong. In such commands, we discovered at the end of the day that we were much more tired than we were on days spent with superior commands.

We decided to break esprit de corps apart and look at the elements of morale, pride, and a sense of unity and teamwork. We found that superior commands have high morale, great pride, and feel and function like a team or family.

By "high morale" we mean that people feel good about being part of the command. They talk about how much they enjoy their jobs, despite the problems that even top commands have. They are vital and energetic. The mood in spaces where people get together is relaxed, open, animated, and friendly. People feel good about the fact that the command does its job well and they are pleased with how it gets the job done.

Superior commands believe that they are the best and they have the self-confidence that they can succeed at whatever is asked of them. This leads them to volunteer for detachments that other commands turn down. It also leads them to look for ways to put a little extra shine or pizzazz in what they do. They do not fear inspections. Instead of "Let's stay out of the limelight because they may discover our weaknesses," their attitude is: "Come aboard! We want to show you how good we are." Although this pride starts with the CO and XO, it permeates the entire command.

Often these commands take pride not just in being the best but in being different: they have their own special way of doing things. There is often a sense of tradition, an awareness of special events in the commands' past that mark their excellence. These commands are proud of this tradition, publicize it, and are committed to living up to it. It is a part of their culture. Even when the command has not recently been a top performer, the desire to restore it to the proud place it had occupied in the past contributes to greater accomplishment by producing a determination to go that extra mile and uphold the command's reputation.

Superior commands also have a strong sense of unity. They work harmoniously to accomplish a common mission. Members at all levels speak about being a family, of feeling that they belong. They talk openly about how well they get along, mentioning, for example, that there is no backstabbing in the wardroom and chiefs quarters, and that people put the good of the command over their own self-interest. They willingly help each other out if it will benefit the command.

Here's what characterizes esprit de corps in superior commands:

- Positive Regard and Expectations Occur at All Levels
- Teamwork Is Promoted
- Morale Is Monitored
- Rewards and Recognition Are Given Frequently
- Command Integrates Incoming Crew Quickly
- Command Focuses on Successes
- Command Encourages Social Activities and Having Fun
- Symbolic Activities Used to Promote Esprit de Corps

Positive Regard and Expectations Occur at All Levels

The leaders in superior commands have positive regard for the men in the command--they care about them and see them as having something important to contribute. They are confident that their people can and will succeed. We found numerous examples of people expressing confidence in the people they work with. One chief simply said: "I've got good guys." A department head on a surface ship stated: "The attitude of this ship is that people are competent and that they can do their jobs."

Some of these commands deliberately take advantage of the Pygmalion effect--if you treat people as winners, they will more likely act that way. And they know the opposite is just as true. Here's the COB on a submarine describing his job:

> My job is to motivate the crew. The easiest way to do that would be for me to walk in the door and start kicking ass from minute one and kick ass until the day I leave--under the assumption that they might not have liked me but they will never forget me. When you do that you destroy the morale of the crew. You wind up treating the other chiefs like seamen, which they naturally resent, and guys start shipping over just to get off the boat. In that situation, you get false respect because it's based on fear. However, that's not the way I do business.
>
> I try to motivate these guys by getting them to perceive themselves as winners. If they believe they are winners, they will be winners. I also try to get them to believe they are part of a team, that they are all part of a family.

The following example illustrates how this attitude led one command senior chief in an air squadron to work with a group of "rejects":

> When I took over I became responsible for the welfare and recreation fund. One of the main tasks confronting me was to raise money for the Christmas party. One of the things I thought about doing was having a fire sale, selling the assets we had, like pictures and T-shirts and so on.
>
> So I went out and got myself some volunteers. Most of these guys were on restriction or were getting drummed out of the Navy, a lot of the undesirables in the First Lieutenant's division. These guys are supposed to be nobodies. But I don't buy that "nobody" crap. Every man has feelings and every man has pride to some degree.
>
> This was my first speech to these guys. I said: "Hey, listen. You are paying your price right now for

whatever you did before. You are starting at zero right here. But it's what you do from this day forward with your work here with me that's going to determine what happens next. So make up your mind right now. You either do it the way it is supposed to be done and reap whatever benefits I can get you, or you continue on with whatever got you into trouble in the first place, and I can guarantee you that you will be in trouble again. You work for me, and I will work for you."

Next thing I said was: "How do you feel about doing something constructive? We're going to take this broom closet over there and we're going to turn it into a fire sale department. I want you guys to handle it. I'm going to tell you right now that there are a lot of people who feel that I should not allow you to handle the squadron's welfare and recreation money. But you haven't done anything to me and until you do, I have no reason to feel that way."

So I started each one off with $30. I had several officers and chiefs come tell me that some of these kids had over $400. I had one kid come back with over $700. And they would say, "Hey, you know that kid could have beat feet." But he didn't. So I told this one maintenance chief, "Look, his personality and 'go-get-em' attitude made us $700. Now, what else you got to say? If you don't want to go sit there and do it yourself, then shut your mouth. Let the man do his thing; he's into something he enjoys. Just because a guy has been kicked in the head doesn't mean you have to stomp on him. Give him a chance to prove himself. If he can't, then he's out."

So we made it. We had this big fancy shindig and still had about $400 left over. And I think that of all my accomplishments in this command, that's the one I'm proudest about.

Teamwork Is Promoted

Superior commands work hard at getting people to work together as a unit, both on the department and division level and in the command as a whole. This starts at the top with the CO and XO explicitly endorsing a team or family model of operating. This requires getting people to communicate frequently with each other, clarifying roles, coordinating with each other, allocating resources fairly, and praising people equally for their contributions.

As already acknowledged, superior commands act to minimize organizational conflict. One CO holds officer training after every evening meal in the wardroom to make sure that all the officers see each other at least once a day and in relaxing circumstances. It also allows him to discuss the command with everyone present. Another CO of an aviation squadron had to prepare for a corrosion control inspection by working all weekend. Instead of just bringing in the maintenance department, he had the whole squadron come in, including the air crews and administrative people, and had them help the maintenance department work on the airplanes. He saw this as an opportunity to foster a sense of teamwork and mutual help.

Some of the superior commands attack this problem through training. For example, for submarines, they try to make the training shipwide instead of just focusing on one department or the other. Here's the engineering chief describing how his boat conducts training:

> The TRE, or Tactical Readiness Evaluation, is performed at the end of one patrol, and it looks at the ship's control party. The ORSE, or Operational Reactor Safeguards Exam, comes at the end of the next patrol and looks at the engineering and propulsion plant. Most boats, when they make a patrol prior to their TRE, forget all about engineering and hammer everyone on ship's control. And then when they do an ORSE run, they forget all about ship's control and hammer engineering. Our boat balances it for every patrol. We do ship's control and engineering drills on every patrol.

As a result, neither end of the boat feels that it is working harder at drilling than the other. It also produces a sustained, high level of all-round performance rather than performance that waxed and waned depending upon which end of the boat was being inspected.

There are more subtle ways, though, for senior officers to achieve teamwork and unity. The CO in an air squadron had a chief who wanted to be promoted to maintenance control, a position considered necessary for a chief to move up the career ladder. After this chief was denied the promotion, he asked the other chiefs why they thought he was denied. They candidly told him what they thought his weaknesses were. As a result, he began feeling he was of no value to the command and that he was never going to achieve his career goals. The CO learned of this because the command master chief told him and because the chief himself took advantage of the CO's open-door policy.

Here is the continuation of the story in the words of the CO:

> He told me he didn't think he could meet his ambitions in this command and repeated what the other chiefs had told him was wrong with him. He was real down on himself. But I felt like I would be doing him a disservice if I told him he did not have these problems. So I said, "Tell me all the things the other chiefs said." And we made a list of them. Then I told him: "Chief, you are right. You do have these problems. What we have to do is outline a plan of action of how you are going to overcome each one of these." Well, it took him aback because I reinforced what the rest of the chiefs had said about his problems. Then I said: "You need to overcome these before you can be assigned to maintenance control. You're not going to escape these problems by transferring to another command, because, for one thing, your reputation will follow you. And secondly, I will not approve a transfer to another squadron because I like you too well and you do too great a job for us."
>
> After that, I called all of the chiefs together except him and said: "I want you to know my policy first-hand. I don't object to your responding candidly to Chief So-and-So about his problems. But let me tell you one thing: from today forth your total goal in life is to make him the best chief petty officer in this squadron. If you don't help him overcome his problem, then you are not doing your job as a fellow chief petty officer." Nobody said anything. I then said: "I will not tolerate one chief petty officer backstabbing another. We have identified Chief So-and-So's problems, and he feels badly about them. What we do now is build him up. I want you to support him and strengthen him and help him overcome his weaknesses." And boy, they did! He has just turned out super!

Morale Is Monitored

Realizing that morale is vital to top performance, all levels of superior commands pay attention to it. When they become aware of clues that suggest a morale problem, they bring it up and act quickly to remedy it. If there is a problem in the wardroom or chiefs quarters, usually the chiefs or officers themselves act to correct it. If it cannot be handled on a lower level, it is brought to the attention of an appropriate superior.

Much of the monitoring of morale, especially by the CO and XO, is done by getting out and about. The CO of one surface ship reports how he walks through the whole ship--including the mess decks and the berthing spaces--at least every other day. He says that one of the things he is looking for is whether or not "somebody's got his lips on upside down." If he does see signs of discontent, he tries to find out what's causing it. The chiefs play a special role in monitoring morale because they are most in touch with the crew. This is one reason the COs of superior commands meet regularly and frequently with the command senior chief and periodically visit the chiefs quarters.

One aspect of morale that superior commands monitor closely is whether or not their men are getting burned out from working too hard. They know that when people are tired they get careless and that this increases the likelihood of accidents and diminishes the quality of performance. In one command, the CO had made it clear that it was not the quantity of training that counted but the quality. He did not want "negative training" to occur. If he saw that the men were so exhausted that they were not learning, he or the XO would cancel the drill, give the men some rest, and start it again when they were fresh.

Several of the superior commands planned things so that work was done by Friday and their weekends were free. Even in those superior commands that did work long hours, the norm was that the chiefs would let their men go home when the work was done. Average commands often made their men stick around even if there was nothing for them to do.

Rewards and Recognition Are Given Frequently

Superior commands realize that one of the best ways to motivate their men is to recognize and reward success. So, in these commands there is a continual attempt to do this by formal and informal means and by all levels. Recognition and rewards include informally praising a person in a one-on-one conversation, mentioning people in the POD, giving recognition at Captain's Call, letters of achievement and commendation, and Navy medals. Average commands reward and recognize people less frequently than superior commands.

Several of these top commands recognize men who became qualified by presenting them with a certificate or letter of congratulations or even a ceremony. One command wrote the man's family, congratulating them and telling them about the man's achievement. When the navigator of one surface ship gets a report that his radiomen made no errors for that period, he writes "Well done" on it and has it distributed throughout the command, with a copy to the CO.

Command Integrates Incoming Crew Quickly

Superior commands pay special attention to making sure that incoming crew are quickly integrated into the command. This involves explaining to them what's expected, introducing them to other people, showing them where things are, assigning work, and generally getting them to feel at home. Although all commands have indoctrination and sponsorship programs, superior commands put more time and effort into them than the average commands do. They try to leave nothing to chance. They develop systems so details are not overlooked. The CO on a surface ship describes their system:

> The first 30 days--that's when you make an impression and the guy decides if he's going to stay or not. That's where our sponsorship program comes in. I send a naval message to every new man that comes on board the ship. This started out as pretty basic, but we have added to it as we have gone along and created a whole system. For a while we were having difficulties with the sponsor sending the new guy information about the ship, but now we have a checklist and when stuff goes out, it's checked off.
>
> The chief stands up every week and says, "Here is who is coming in December, and the sponsor assigned to him is so-and-so." And the sponsor package goes out shortly after that. The guy doesn't fall through the cracks and get lost. When he comes on board, somebody knows about it. Then the chief master-at-arms has a welcome aboard kit, which contains sheets, shower shoes, toothbrush, some other stuff, and a brochure about the command.

Some commands also send a letter to the man's family, telling them about the new command and that they are pleased to have the man join them. One command arranges to have the new person's name stenciled above his bunk before he arrives.

In average commands, things are less systematic. New members may have received no advance welcoming literature, or the indoc program will be delayed for a few months. In some cases, a person will not have a bunk assigned. In these commands, men are left more on their own to get oriented and up to speed.

Command Focuses on Successes

Superior commands often refer to their tradition of success. One air squadron we visited had on display in the ready room photograph albums with pictures of the squadron going back over 40 years. Significant accomplishments of the squadron were emphasized in the albums. One outstanding submarine traditionally referred to whatever it did as "the best ever." The navigator explains how the tradition developed:

> It started in the new construction phase when we went to sea for the first time. We were in a heavy fog, couldn't see the next buoy, and there's a four-star admiral riding with us, and he said, "That's the best I've ever seen." And then our sea trials were the best ever done by a 688. So we started to kid ourselves--every time something would go right, it was, "Hey, we're the best ever!"

Sometimes a command's tradition of success can work against it. The XO of one average submarine kept telling his men that they should live up to the command's proud past. In his zeal, he continually pressured and micromanaged his men. When they did not do well, he rubbed it in by pointing out how they had failed to live up to the command's tradition. They became disheartened by always having this thrown in their faces.

Command Encourages Social Activities and Having Fun

"If you're not having fun, you're not doing it right."

-- Commanding Officer (Submarine)

"I use the principle of work hard and play hard."

-- Executive Officer (Air)

Although all commands have social activities like parties, ball games, and family picnics, superior commands seem to have more attendance at them and more participation in organizing them. They realize that all work and no play makes a dull command.

The CO of a surface ship explains his views on social activities:

> The XO and I participate regularly in the ship's picnics. We have picnics that dependents are invited to, along with some organized sports. It's generally a good time for the crew. We make sure they get to do it during working hours so that they see it as a "bene." A lot of commands have picnics on Saturday. Well, I don't consider that much of a bene. This way they'll enjoy themselves even more.
>
> We had an organized softball team that performed well and was second in the league. There was a lot of

> general participation there. The XO played on the team, and I went to all the games. We publicized it a lot. There were also lesser athletic endeavors: a five-man basketball team, bowling league, racquetball, and some other things too. I think it helps to lower people's frustration.

Superior commands also pay attention to the families of their men. Some send out a family newsletter outlining upcoming events and noting accomplishments or significant events. Others have special briefings for families before deployment. Many have family night when families are encouraged to visit and tour the command. And, as we have seen, families are invited to social activities and awards ceremonies.

Several COs of superior commands encourage the wardroom and chiefs quarters to socialize among themselves. They believe that if the men get to know each other informally, they will work better as a team.

Symbolic Activities Used to Promote Esprit de Corps

Superior commands use symbols and rituals to build morale, pride, and team spirit. In one aviation squadron, at the first quarters for new arrivals, the CO ceremoniously takes off the man's old cap, replaces it with one bearing his new command's name and insignia, shakes the man's hand, and welcomes him to the squadron. Most superior commands enthusiastically sell and wear t-shirts, belt buckles, caps, and other memorabilia advertising the command. Here's the department head of another air squadron describing what they do:

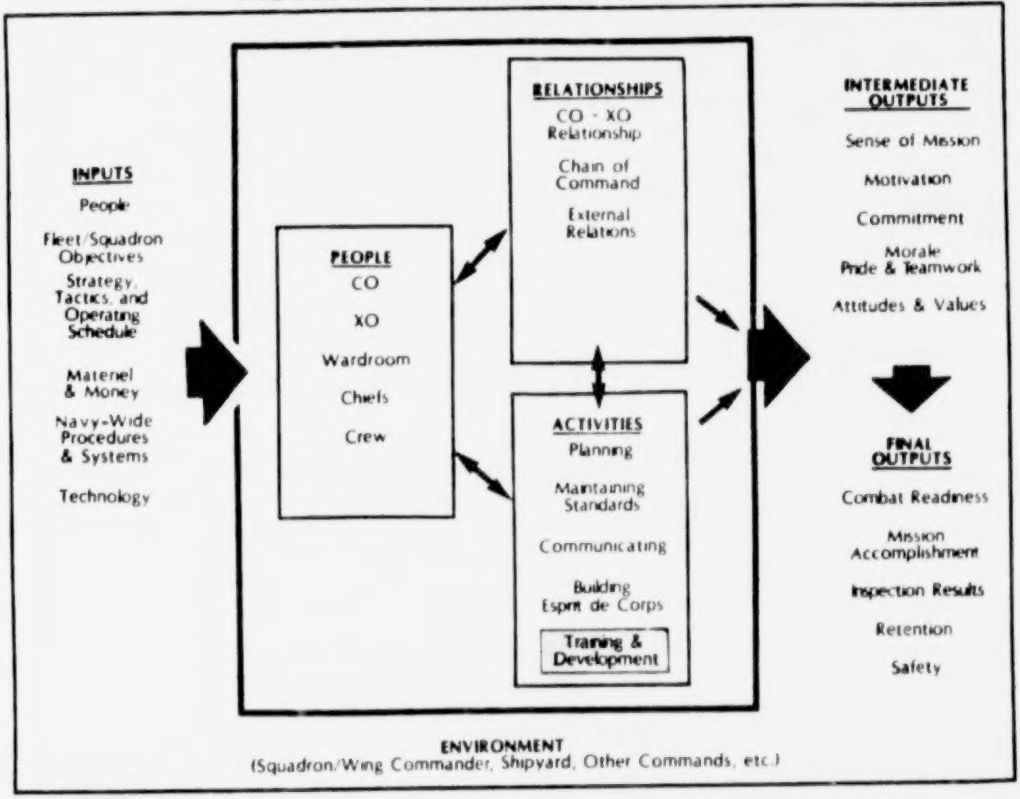
> Recognition is a big thing. It helps a lot if everyone's peers can see that certain individuals have done well and contributed to readiness and have been recognized for it. People like to see their names. They like to see pictures of themselves. Here on shore, we sometimes get the press involved. They come and take pictures. Supply is always there to give everyone a nice folder to put their picture in, which everybody likes.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

"It cannot be too often repeated that in modern war, and especially in modern naval war, the chief factor in achieving triumph is what has been done in the way of thorough preparation and training before the beginning of war."

-- Theodore Roosevelt: Graduation Address, U.S. Naval Academy, June 1902

MODEL FOR COMMAND EXCELLENCE



Training and Development

- Value of Training is Recognized
- Training is Kept Realistic and Practical
- Training Programs are Monitored and Evaluated
- All Levels Participate in Training and Development
- Command Emphasizes Professional Development and Career Planning

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We have seen that COs of superior commands ensure that training is effective. To do this, they explicitly emphasize the importance of training to the crew, monitor the quality of training, try to get special training billets, work hard to get schedules with time to follow through on planned training, and make sure that training is realistic and linked to combat readiness. Here we further develop this theme by presenting what the command as a whole does to support training.

Specific ways in which superior commands promote training and development are as follows:

- Value of Training Is Recognized
- Training Is Kept Realistic and Practical
- Training Programs Are Monitored and Evaluated
- All Levels Participate in Training and Development
- Command Emphasizes Professional Development and Career Planning

Value of Training Is Recognized

In superior commands, people at all levels take training and development seriously. Considerable time goes into planning the training and then attending it. The quality and frequency are monitored; training is not gundecked, as it sometimes is on average commands. People are given time and resources to organize and prepare for the training they deliver. Training opportunities, especially those with big payoffs for combat readiness, are sought out and fought for. Not only is there a lot of formal training, like drills and classroom exercises, but there is a lot of informal, one-on-one training. There is also a training mind-set that is alert to opportunities to become more proficient or to help someone else do so. In addition, in these units, there is a lot of cross-training. This allows men to learn new skills and is valuable to the command because it means that if someone leaves or cannot do his job, there is a ready replacement.

Training is also used to promote professional development. People are expected to become qualified on schedule, and there are penalties if they do not. For example, in one command, if people do not make continued satisfactory progress towards becoming qualified, they have to attend several hours of mandatory "study-hall" in the evening or on the weekend. In superior commands people are not left to their own devices to become qualified; help is offered. These commands also try to get formal training through schools for their men whenever possible, and they spend a lot of time counseling people on their careers.

In average commands, training tends to be more casual, is cancelled more often because of recurring crises, is not attended as well, and is not monitored as frequently. On one submarine we visited, the crew referred to the training with amusement and said that it was usually boring. Often people repeated the same lecture just to fill up the time. It was common for training not to occur and for records to be gundecked. The uniform perception on this boat was that what mattered to the CO and XO was what looked good on paper.

Training Is Kept Realistic and Practical

The purpose of training is to be ready to wage war. Superior commands never forget this. Training is not an end in itself. Average commands tend to focus more on getting awards and high inspection scores; superior commands see beyond these to their overall mission and being ready to carry it out. For this reason, and because they do not have unlimited time, energy, and resources, they emphasize that training be realistic and practical.

The CO of one VS squadron made a special request to go to Bermuda to practice antisubmarine warfare even though this had not been done by a VS squadron for several years. The request, which was granted, was prompted by his feeling that continuing to practice in the usual trainer was insufficient. He wanted access to the acoustic signatures of real submarines. Another CO on a sub tried to keep a training missile on board as much as possible because he wanted his men to get accustomed to its presence and to have a vivid reminder of their mission. The CO on one ship insisted that his men make a fire control drill realistic; consequently, his men rigged heat lamps to make the doors hot to touch.

Another squadron had a choice between competing in a fighter derby against other air squadrons or flying for the President's inaugural ceremony. The CO chose the derby because he recognized the training opportunities. And instead of using his most experienced pilots--a common practice that would have guaranteed a high score--he and the XO decided to use a number of the junior pilots in order to allow them to get more experience dogfighting. In order to help develop the junior officers, both he and the XO did not fly, despite the fact that they had the most experience in the command.

Training Programs Are Monitored and Evaluated

Superior commands monitor their training on an ongoing basis to make sure it is high-quality. Both the CO and the XO periodically attend training. For example, one CO attends all officer training, which occurs several times per week on his ship. These officers want to make sure that the content is accurate, up to date, interesting, and practical. Here's the XO of a submarine discussing what he does:

> I try to get to each division's training in the morning. I normally stay about 10 or 15 minutes to make sure things are going the way I want them to go. If they are not, I stop it, have them regroup, and do it over. When I stop it, I get the division officer up here and the man conducting the training. Then we have a session on why I stopped it.

These senior officers also make sure that people are attending training. Another CO states:

> Officers always come up with excuses why they can't go to training. Here everybody goes. Even at sea, people get out of the rack and come to officer's training because they know they are required. And we make sure everybody is there.

As an example of monitoring training and being closely involved, the CO of one submarine reports learning that his sonar tracking team had not done as well as anticipated during the two weeks they were using the trainer. By meeting with his weapons training officer he was able to correct the problem and make sure it would not happen again. He explains that it was by talking to the training instructor that he found out that things were not going well:

> I talk to him every day. I ask: "How did we do today? What problems do we have?" Of course, they're very hesitant to talk to a commanding officer and even more hesitant to tell him what they really think. So I normally have to break that down. You can't be concerned about getting your feelings hurt. You only get to use the trainer for a limited time, so there's no time for egos and all that stuff. If you're not doing hardcore training, if you're not finding mistakes and fixing them, then you're not using the trainer effectively.

All Levels Participate in Training and Development

In superior commands, all levels are involved in training and development efforts. Although the sanction comes from the top, officers continually help each other train, while chiefs help train other enlisted. Generally it is the most experienced person who does the training, but this is not always so. If someone has just returned from a school on learning how to work with a new system, he may be asked to do some training even if he is junior to his students.

Although the chiefs have the unofficial job of training the junior officers, they are most active in training the enlisted personnel below them. They are continually involved in planning, preparing, delivering, and evaluating enlisted training. Most of the training they do is on-the-job training. One chief in charge of the flight deck for an aviation squadron trains his new men by tying a rope around his waist and having them grab hold and follow him around for several days. He says that one reason he does this is that "They have no idea what a jet blast or prop wash will do to you." Another chief reports that they needed to check some valves on a piece of equipment that was rarely taken apart. Realizing this was an unusual training opportunity, he had his three watch standers take it apart, clean it, and reassemble it with him supervising. He says he never fixes a piece of equipment without having someone at his side to learn what he is doing. In many superior commands, it is the chiefs who monitor and implement the enlisted qualifications program. They check people's qual cards, counsel, and offer or arrange for help.

Here's an XO describing the commitment to training on his submarine:

> There's a grassroots interest in training here. The men see the benefit of a sound training and qualification program. We have a chief who is the training petty officer, and he keeps track of the quals status and he schedules the boards when an individual completes all of his checkouts on systems and compartments and what not.
>
> Even when you get all the way down to the second-class petty officer, they see the value of training. They keep the standard where it's at right now. They love to make it hard on each other in the boards without being jerks. They want to make sure that when a guy qualifies, he's got the stuff. We fly under both the gold and silver dolphins. If you've been on board here the maximum amount of time, you should have your dolphins.

In superior commands people are ready to help each other learn. They realize that the more proficient each person is, the better the overall performance of the command will be. In addition, as we saw previously, they also are motivated to help each other because of the positive regard and concern they have for each other. On one average ship we visited, people often did not help each other because they were too busy fighting fires or felt that they weren't getting much support. They could not see beyond their own self-interest.

Officers are also involved in pushing training for the command. The senior officers, in particular, help the more junior officers learn certain aspects of their job. Several commands have officer development programs. For example, in one there is a monthly lecture given that deals with such topics as retention or how to write a naval message or how to provide counseling. In another command, the CO has weekly "management seminars" for his officers and some of the senior enlisted.

Command Emphasizes Professional Development and Career Planning

Officers and chiefs of superior commands are actively involved in assisting their men with professional development and career planning. This comes right from the top, with COs being very involved with retention programs and encouraging people to advance. Accordingly, they support people going to schools and spend a surprising amount of time talking to people about their future plans and trying to sell them on a Navy career and re-enlisting. Here's the weapons officer on a submarine describing the involvement of his CO:

> He knows who's coming up for re-enlistment and pays close attention to the re-enlistment bonuses that people are eligible for. For everybody that's going to re-enlist, he's intimately involved in figuring out when is the best time and the best program for them. If you are coming up for re-enlistment, he'll talk to you about what you are going to do when you get out.
>
> Then he'll go down to the chiefs' quarters and ask, "What are you guys doing to get people off to school?" --because we have three months now where there's very little sea time. And they'll look a little bit harder to find another guy to send to a school.

In these commands, the command career counselor is seen as playing a special role. In contrast to the practice in average commands, this person is often handpicked by the CO because of his commitment to the job and his ability to interact with people. In particular, he maintains a close working relationship with detailers and works hard at staying current with all the Navy's re-enlistment programs. In one superior command, the CO himself wore the insignia of the command career counselor. With this push from the top, all of the superior commands had above-average retention rates.

The chiefs are the driving force behind professional development for enlisted personnel. One command career counselor reports how, within a week of a new person's arrival, he and the command master chief sit down with the person and discuss his advancement. They let the person know when he can expect to advance to various positions during the next two years and then help him set specific advancement goals. About six months later this chief contacts the person again to see if he's accomplished what he said he would do. "I might tell him: 'You know, we talked about you having a certain course done by this time. Have you done it?'" The various messages that come in about new schools or programs are conspicuously posted on a bulletin board in a main traffic area. And as the time draws near for re-enlistment, chiefs in superior commands, particularly the command career counselor or the command master chief, will meet with individuals to discuss their future.

All of the superior commands take great pride in getting someone to re-enlist. They often mark such occasions (as they do when a person becomes qualified) with some type of ceremony. In one command, the CO gathers all those re-enlisting together in a group and urges them to really think about the meaning of the words in the oath they are taking. He believes that most men just do it automatically the first time they sign up, or are too nervous to pay much attention to the words. The second time, though, is based on experience in the Navy, and he wants his men to make a deliberate and informed decision--to fully realize the commitment contained in the oath.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

> "Leadership is a difficult but not impossible quality to acquire. Any individual who really wants to be a leader can be one. It takes hard work. It takes knowledge. It takes enthusiasm. But it can be done."
>
> -- Admiral Arleigh Burke

In preparing this text, we have made two assumptions. The first assumption is that you want to improve the effectiveness of your command. This may seem easy enough to agree to on the surface; however, seriously pursuing this goal requires dedication, hard work, and an openness to different ways of doing things. As you know, it is not easy to engage in self-examination or to change old habits. The second assumption we have made is that change is possible. We are convinced that such an effort is worthwhile--not only for you, individually, but for the men and women whose welfare you are entrusted with, and, ultimately, for the security of our country.

In the Introduction, we discussed some of the general ways in which Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! can help you. These uses include:

- diagnosing the causes of command problems
- preparing an action plan to solve them
- targeting your efforts to save time and energy
- anticipating obstacles and benefits of intended actions
- generating new and better ways to do things
- deciding what works best for you
- inspiring you to achieve new heights of leadership

In order to give you a sense of how Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! can be applied to specific areas, we want to offer some examples of things you can do. We hope our list will suggest other ways to apply the principles presented.

1. Our data indicates that the commanding officer, the executive officer, and the CO-XO relationship are the most important determinants of command excellence. Given the impor-

tance of the role of the CO and the XO, we suggest you start by writing down your command philosophy. How do you think your command should function and why? Try writing descriptions of how each of the People, Relationships, and Activity areas discussed here should function in your ideal command. Try visualizing the command as it carries out an evolution, say, preparing for an ORSE or deployment. What does it look like? Are there any special sayings or slogans by which you would want your ideal command to be governed?

2. Identify three or four key issues that any command needs to take care of to be successful. Prioritize them if you can. Think about how you have seen people act to carry them out successfully and unsuccessfully in other commands you have been on. What do you think has worked and what hasn't worked? Can you think of times or circumstances when these priorities might change? How would you currently rate yourself and your command at taking care of these things?

3. Our data indicates it is important that the CO and XO work together as a team. What can you do to achieve this? First, it is helpful for both the CO and XO individually to clarify their command philosophy and the roles that they think a CO and XO should play in a command. Then, they can meet to discuss and clarify these roles with each other. Besides a general discussion of beliefs and preferred modes of operating, they can focus on respective "hot buttons," things that one person could do that the other would not like. Another way to structure this discussion is by talking about specific examples in the past when a command you were in functioned well or poorly. The overall point, though, is to begin a process of open, frequent, and frank communication. You can't work well as a team without knowing where the rest of the team is coming from.

4. Another area of importance is selling your philosophy to the entire command. Again, to do this you need first to be able to articulate your philosophy. Then ask yourself if you think the crew understands and is committed to your goals and the way you want to achieve them. Have you been successful at communicating your priorities to them? One way to find out is to get out and about and ask people to tell you what they think you consider important. Is it the same as what you think is important?

If you discover that people don't know how you want your command to operate or don't seem to be committed to it, think about what you could do to change this. As we have seen, techniques include getting people together and telling them, having "management seminars" with the officers or senior enlisted, and repeatedly using and emphasizing special slogans or mottos. Another possibility is to present examples of outstanding performance from other commands, or to point out when some evolution or action occurs in your own command that could serve as a prime example. If you can give them a picture of where you want to go, why, and how you want to get there, the chances are much greater that they will work hard to get there.

5. We saw that another strong distinguishing characteristic between superior and average commands is how they manage the external environment. What is your attitude toward the various groups in the outside environment--your immediate superiors, squadron or wing staff, the shipyard, tenders, other commands, etc.? Can you make a list of the important outside groups or organizations with which you have frequent contact? Which groups are most critical to your success? How would you rate your relationship with them? Do you see them as sources of help or as obstacles? Can you identify one of these groups with whom having a better relationship would pay off handsomely in getting the job done? Or can you identify any problems, either short-term or long-term, that could be alleviated if you had more help from someone in the external environment? If so, what could you do to improve this relationship? If there are things you can see that would help, but you don't have the time or personality to do them well, is there someone in your command you could ask to do this? Are there resources that you could turn to, such as officers in other commands who could suggest ways to work more effectively with these potential sources of help?

6. Another way you can use Command Excellence: What It Takes to Be the Best! is by having your officers or senior enlisted read it or relevant parts of it and discuss how it applies to your command. A discussion could follow or be integrated with a statement of your command philosophy or your views on leadership and management.

In addition to the concepts presented here, you may be wondering what other sources of help or guidance there are. If you want to read more about the command effectiveness study, there is the final report, Command Excellence in the United States Navy, which goes into more detail about methodology and survey results. There is also the report prepared by McBer for the Navy called Navy Leaders: A Profile of Exemplary Commanding Officers and Executive Officers (1983). For experience in learning how to apply the command excellence model to your own command, the Leadership and Command Excellence Division offers a two-day Command Excellence Seminar for senior officers. And the nearest Organizational Effectiveness center can provide information and consultation on applying the results of the study. There is also a resource guide prepared for the LCPO and RCC LMET courses that contains related articles on leadership and management.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Methodology of the Command Effectiveness Study

A desire to know the facts led the Navy, in 1976, to contract with McBer and Company for the purpose of finding out what distinguished superior performers from average performers. The results of this study were used as the basis of the Navy's Leadership and Management Education and Training (LMET) courses. Not being content with subjective opinion on what makes for superior performance, McBer used a special interview technique to discover what superior performers actually do in order to excel that average performers do not do. Having identified the "competencies" of these superior performers, the Navy began teaching its sailors (1) to assess their performance against this "competency model" and (2) to strengthen those skills they were weak in.* Although the overall goal of the study was to enhance command excellence, the focus in the LMET courses has been on improving individual performance.

The Navy realized, however, that superior-performing individuals are not all there is to achieving command excellence, the ultimate goal of all of its training programs. As any sports fan knows, a collection of superstars does not necessarily make a great team. So, in 1982, the Navy asked McBer to elevate its methodology to the organizational level--to find out what are the organizational competencies that distinguish superior Navy commands from average ones.

A joint Navy-McBer team did a pilot study to see if such an investigation was feasible, and the results of that effort were published in 1984 as an interim report. That study allowed us to refine our questions, develop some preliminary hypotheses, and determine what other questions we wanted to answer. After another year of research, the final results are in, and a detailed presentation of our findings is contained in the report Command Excellence in the United States Navy (October 1985).

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* "Competency" is used in a special sense here, to refer to any personal attribute that underlies effective performance. Competencies include knowledge, abilities, personality traits, motives, and self-concept. A "competency model" is a set of those competencies that distinguish superior from average performers. It also includes behavioral indicators of the competencies--that is, statements of specific behavior that show how the competency looks in action. For example, one competency that distinguishes superior from average senior officers is *Initiative*. A behavioral indicator of this competency is *Introduces new ideas or procedures to the command*.

Who was studied, and how was it done? As the first step in the McBer-Navy command effectiveness study, a panel of Navy experts established criteria as to what would be considered a superior command. These experts agreed that a command would be considered superior only if it met all of the following:

- Won the Battle E or was a runner-up
- Won a departmental E
- Passed all major operational readiness inspections or exercises
- Maintained command retention at a level equal to or above the fleet average
- Maintained a strong safety record
- Had a general reputation as being outstanding, as confirmed by flag officers in the chain of command

The study teams visited a total of 21 units: 6 superior and 3 average air squadrons; 3 superior and 3 average submarines; and 3 superior and 3 average surface ships. Each team spent from 4 to 5 days on a unit, with one team visiting a superior command at the same time another team was studying an average command. At the end of each day, the teams presented their findings to one another, noting similarities and differences and identifying unanswered questions or issues that required more data collection.

In each unit, two-hour structured interviews were conducted with the CO, XO, several department heads and division officers, the command master chief or the chief of the boat, and several other key people identified by the CO. On 13 of the units, we also did intensive individual interviews with 6 or 7 chief petty officers. On all 21 commands, we conducted group interviews with junior officers, chief petty officers, petty officers, and other junior enlisted personnel.

In the majority of the individual interviews, the person was asked to describe several incidents when he felt the command as a whole performed effectively, or not quite as well as it could have. In the group interviews, open-ended questions about the command were asked. Topics included the CO, the XO, the CO-XO relationship, the wardroom, the chiefs, the crew and such activities as maintaining standards, planning, and communication. Both individuals and groups were asked to identify those factors that helped or hindered the command's excellence.

The study teams also spent extensive time "shooting the breeze" in the wardroom and chiefs quarters and observing as many unit activities as possible, including repair and maintenance, training, briefings, inspections, Masts, awards ceremonies, FOD walkdown, and even unit reactions to emergencies. The teams reviewed such command records as the Nonjudicial Punishment Log, PODs, human-resource-management survey results, retention records, and public affairs documents. Navy members of the team reviewed CASREPS, NAVFORSTATS, and related classified documents.

Surveys were used to gain further understanding of how these units function. On the eight units that made up the pilot study, the people interviewed were given the Navy Competency Assessment Profile and a Work Group Rating Survey. The Navy Competency Assessment Profile asks respondents to rate themselves on 16 generic competencies of superior performers in the Navy. The Work Group Rating Survey asks for a self-rating as well as ratings of others to find out what roles people play in their work group. (The technical name of this instrument is the Systematic Multiple-Level Observation of Groups Questionnaire, or SYMLOG.)

The 13 units visited after the pilot study were given the Work Group Rating Survey and a two-part Command Information Questionnaire. The second instrument asks respondents to rate their unit on the characteristics of superior commands identified in the pilot study. They are then asked 20 questions designed to find out how committed they are to their jobs.

The command effectiveness study is valuable for several reasons. First, it is an empirical attempt to answer the question of what produces superior command performance. There are many theories on what produces effective leadership and organizational performance. In addition, people's opinions of what it takes to excel at a job--even the opinions of those who in fact do excel--are not always reliable. This is because what people actually do to succeed is not always what they think they are doing. A merit of this study is that it tries to uncover the facts--what it is that commands really do to be superior commands.

Secondly, the study is based on information from many different sources. As noted above, data was gathered through individual and group interviews, observation of the daily activities of the unit, surveys, and written records. Men at all unit levels were interviewed, from the CO down to nonrated seamen, as well as a variety of staff personnel. Using multiple sources of data allowed the results to be cross-checked. It could be determined, for example, whether or not the conclusions reached from the interview data matched those from the survey data--and, in fact, they did. We therefore believe that this study is more reliable than those based on only one source of data, such as interviews.

Other strengths of our study of command excellence are that it is comparative and community-wide. Units from all three communities--air, surface, and submarine--were studied. This provided the opportunity to see what applied to all communities and what was unique to each. Also, superior commands were not the only units studied; each time a superior command was visited, a simultaneous visit was made to an average unit. This contrasting of units enabled us to visualize more clearly what distinguished superior from average commands.

APPENDIX B

The View from the Top: The Views of Flag Officers on Command Excellence

At the end of the command effectiveness study, we decided that it would be worthwhile to include a section on how flag officers view command excellence. After all, they have been COs and XOs themselves, have served in numerous commands, and are in the position of observing and working closely with many others. What do they think distinguishes a superior from an average command? Their answer to this question is the basis for much of their daily decision making, since they are the ones who must identify the superior operational performers and the most combat-ready commands. We were eager to find out whether or not their views would support the results of the command effectiveness study.

We interviewed officers from the ranks of vice admiral, commodore, rear admiral, and admiral. Although none of the flag officers interviewed were briefed on the study before their interviews, we were surprised at how much congruence there was between their views and the results of the study. And between the different ranks, we did not find differences of opinion so much as differences of emphasis. Though the same elements were mentioned in most of the interviews, each person focused on some elements more than others.

We asked these officers "What distinguishes a superior from an average command?" The following is a summary of their answers.

First, there was agreement on the significance of the role of the commanding officer as being the most important single determinant of a command's excellence. As one vice admiral stated, a command "reflects the performance, the attitude, and the style of the commanding officer." Another said that a command "takes on the personality of its commanding officer, and it does this so quickly, it's amazing." One commodore said he looks for the "footprint" of the CO when he visits a command:

> When you visit a command, you can see the "footprint" of a good CO. The spaces are squared away, the people are smiling, they stand up and say "hello" when you come in. If you ask them one question, they'll give you 20 minutes worth of stuff about their division, their equipment, and their function in the mission. That's the footprint of the CO. He's making them do that as a way of getting them to be proud of their part in the mission execution.

Several flag officers mentioned the importance of enthusiasm and pride permeating the command, and that this process starts with the CO. One officer cited the role of enthusiasm in getting the entire command heading in the same direction. The job of gaining the command's commitment to the CO's philosophy is like that of a salesman, he observed: "You've got to be enthusiastic and believe in what you're doing. Once you do that, you can sell vacuum cleaners. But you've got to believe in that vacuum cleaner."

One of the rear admirals interviewed emphasized that the superior COs are able to walk a fine line. On the one hand, they have to get people to live up to their potential, "to inspire people past their previous point of achievement." At the same time, they have to have "a barometer within themselves so they don't push people too hard."

A commodore stressed the importance of the commanding officer's focusing on the big picture and managing the external environment. He also said that the superior submarines try to be as independent as possible of the squadron--in other words, that their COs take the initiative to prepare their own schedules and solve their own problems, only coming to him to inform him of what they are doing. His reaction to this is, "Shoot, if I see somebody who's willing to take some initiative and march off on their own, that frees up part of my time. And that's the way it ought to be."

But being operationally independent does not mean avoiding contact with the squadron or wing staff; rather, the CO must learn to use them as resources. This same commodore felt that most COs need to take more initiative to communicate with squadron or wing staff. He encourages the COs who report to him to stop by his office at the end of the day when things are quiet, to talk informally for a few minutes. He also said COs should talk with each other about what went well in their command and what was disappointing. By doing this, they learn from each other. He said too many COs have the attitude, "It's my ship, and I'll do it my way. I don't need the advice of the guy next door."

Another major concern was delegation and the avoidance of micromanaging by the CO. One objection to micromanaging is that it inhibits development. It takes away the opportunity to learn from the person who should have been allowed to do the task in the first place.

In order to focus on the big picture, outstanding COs have a plan or a set of long-range goals that they want to accomplish. This enables them to assert their interests with their superiors, inspire their crews, and leave their imprint on their command. As one rear admiral put it, "The mission and goals of the command have to be clearly defined."

These flag officers also believe that a concern for maintaining standards is characteristic of superior commands. One commodore thought that people should be willing to confront poor performance more than they do. He stated: "If a guy is overweight, then you just have to say, 'You're fat, and if you don't lose weight, I'm going to throw you out of the Navy.' You just have to look people in the eye and tell them what you think." And one vice admiral said that superior COs act like firm but fair fathers of teenagers. He thinks that COs gain the commitment of their sailors by providing strong, positive direction:

> The great majority of sailors want to do well, and they want to contribute to the good reputation of the command. Unfortunately, there are a small number of incorrigibles. They are a tiny percentage, but no matter what you do as a leader, you're never going to turn them around. They are not contributing to the good of the command, and they should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible. There is a point beyond which you should abandon soul-saving and get rid of the nonperformer, because he is demanding more of your time than his skills are worth.

This same flag officer also mentioned the importance of administering discipline fairly and swiftly. He stated: "The troops need to know that when they go to see the captain, they are going to be listened to with a sympathetic ear, and if they are wrong and have broken the rules, they will be dealt with decisively." He affirmed that the CO must deal with second-time offenders especially firmly or risk "losing control of the situation."

These experts also stressed the importance of teamwork. One emphasized the critical importance of the CO and the XO working well together. Another commented on the importance of having the chief petty officers involved in the day-to-day running of the command:

> They must be recognized as the technical experts in their own fields, but more than that, they and the junior officers are the middle management of the ship. They lead the division, organize and assign the work, and see that it is properly done. They are also responsible for training the junior officers, helping them along, and teaching them how to be responsible.

Another necessary ingredient is caring. A rear admiral observed:

> Also essential is the feeling that the number-one guy genuinely cares--and that feeling must be pervasive. If it's apparent to the officers, it will be reflected

> in their behavior. It's extremely important that it reach down to the lowest airman or seaman. Ultimately, of course, it reaches dependents, too.

He added that it is possible to discern the level of caring "without ever really walking through the door of the command." To do this, he uses indicators such as how long it takes for a person who committed an infraction to be taken to Captain's Mast, how long it takes special-request chits to be acted on, and if such a request is denied, how and what the person is told.

One flag officer expressed a similar idea, but he put it in terms of being involved and making a commitment to the command. By this he meant having a sense of ownership of the command--taking responsibility for its successes, but also standing up and being counted when things go wrong. He also saw this involvement manifested as getting out and about, noting that "the bridge is important, and you have to be there--but you have to get down to the deck, too."

A vice admiral touched on the issue of giving people positive feedback and recognition:

> If someone does not do a good job, then they need to be told, "Hey, that's not up to standard," or, "Here's how you should fix it." And if a job is done really well, then the person who did it owns some of the real estate. He ought to be told, for instance, "That really is the best-looking trash disposal unit I've seen in the whole Navy." Everybody needs to be praised. Fireman Gronk or MM3 Smith needs to be told periodically, "Your diesel is really good." It's very important that good performance be recognized promptly and with sufficient fanfare.

Related to the issue of morale, another flag officer mentioned that the superior commands he had been in generated a feeling of electricity:

> It's a command atmosphere that either you have or you don't have. You can see it very quickly just by walking around through hangars, passageways, or mess decks. Do the people put their heads down, or do they look you in the eye and say, "Good morning. How are you?"

One element mentioned by all the flag officers interviewed was the importance of good communication throughout the command. One emphasized communication following the chain of command, in particular, keeping one's superiors informed. He says that, throughout his career in the Navy, he has observed the following to be true of superior commands:

> In these commands, the chain of command can handle almost any news, bad as well as good, as long as they get it in a timely manner. No commanding officer likes to be blindsided or get the news from somebody other than his own chain of command. "Keep the boss informed!" I think that should be an axiom of military life. Even if it's bad news, even if it's incomplete, make sure that you get the word to him first. That is critical to maintaining support and loyalty, up and down the chain of command.

Self-control was also seen as a distinguishing feature of the COs of superior commands. An admiral explained:

> We've all worked with guys who are emotional. Hell, I get emotional at times, too. But you should never get emotional when there's a crisis going on. Uncontrolled emotion is terrible.
>
> I can remember being in the ready room of one air squadron, about to see a training film, when something really big happened. The commanding officer, who I greatly admired, was being bugged by everyone to do something. He said, "Roll the movie." The others couldn't seem to comprehend that. But he was so confident of the squadron and their ability to handle the situation that he just took himself out of it and told them to keep him informed of developments. When a situation threatens to get out of hand, I think it's important to stay calm and be able to say, like that CO did, "Roll the movie"--and then to get on with it.

The following list summarizes the main elements of command excellence identified by these flag officers:

- The CO is the most important determinant of command excellence.
- Enthusiasm, pride, and commitment are essential to command excellence.
- The CO needs to build positive external relationships.
- The CO needs to focus on the big picture and avoid micromanaging.
- Standards need to be maintained through performance feedback, staffing, and firm, fair, and swift discipline.
- Teamwork is critical.
- The chiefs have a special role to play.

- Starting with the CO, superiors need to communicate to subordinates that they care about their welfare.
- Recognition must be given for a job well done.
- Good communication is vital, especially keeping superiors informed.
- The CO needs to exercise self-control.

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